

*N.W.H. 2  
2799.4*

V.3

# NATIONAL CONFERENCE

PACIFIC UNITARIAN SCHOOL  
FOR THE MINISTRY  
Berkeley, California

OF THE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF

Unitarian, Liberal Christian, Free Christian, Presbyterian,

AND OTHER

Non-Subscribing or Kindred Congregations.

## REPORT

OF THE

CONFERENCE HELD AT LEEDS,

APRIL, 1888;

BEING THE THIRD TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

WILLIAMS & NORGATE, 14, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN,  
LONDON; AND 20, SOUTH FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH.

LEEDS: J. DODGSON, PARK ROW.

MANCHESTER: H. RAWSON & CO., 16, NEW BROWN STREET.

1888.



# NATIONAL CONFERENCE

OF THE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF

Unitarian, Liberal Christian, Free Christian, Presbyterian,

AND OTHER

Non-Subscribing or Kindred Congregations.

---

## REPORT

OF THE

CONFERENCE HELD AT LEEDS,

APRIL, 1888;

BEING THE THIRD TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE.

---

PRICE SIXPENCE.

---

WILLIAMS & NORGATE, 14, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN,  
LONDON ; AND 20, SOUTH FREDERICK STREET, EDINBURGH.

LEEDS : J. DODGSON, PARK ROW.

MANCHESTER : H. RAWSON & CO., 16, NEW BROWN STREET.

1888.

---

H. RAWSON & CO., PRINTERS, 16, NEW BROWN STREET, MANCHESTER.

---

## C O N T E N T S .

---

|  | PAGE.     |
|--|-----------|
| <b>INTRODUCTION</b>  | <b>V.</b> |
| <b>PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIRST DAY—</b>   |           |
| Communion and Religious Service  | 1         |
| Sermon by the Rev. H. W. Crosskey, LL.D.   | 3         |
| <b>PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECOND DAY—</b>  |           |
| Devotional Service   | 21        |
| <i>Morning Session</i> —Letter from the Rev. Charles Hargrove, M.A.                      | 23        |
| Resolution on the Death of the Rev. Charles Beard, LL.D.                                 | 23        |
| Speech of the Chairman, F. Nettlefold, Esq.  | 25        |
| Paper on “The Organisation of our Churches,”<br>by the Rev. James Martineau, LL.D., D.D. | 26        |
| Discussion: Speech of Mr. Harry Rawson   | 59        |
| ,,      Rev. Joseph Wood   | 65        |
| ,,      Mr. James R. Beard   | 68        |
| ,,      Mr. W. A. Jevons   | 71        |
| ,,      Rev. Dr. Crosskey  | 72        |
| ,,      Rev. James Harwood   | 76        |
| ,,      Rev. R. A. Armstrong   | 78        |
| ,,      Rev. J. C. Street  | 80        |
| ,,      Mr. Herbert New  | 82        |
| ,,      Rev. Dr. Martineau   | 84        |
| <i>Afternoon Session</i> —Speech of Sir James Kitson, Bart.                              | 89        |
| Papers on “The Obstacles to the Advancement of Free<br>Christianity among the People”    |           |
| by the Rev. T. W. Freckleton   | 90        |
| by Mr. John Dendy, Junr.   | 97        |
| Discussion: Speech of Mrs. Louisa Herford  | 104       |
| ,,      Mr. T. Chatfeild Clarke  | 107       |
| ,,      Mr. C. W. Jones  | 109       |
| ,,      Rev. Alfred Hood   | 110       |
| ,,      Miss Edith Lupton  | 111       |
| ,,      Mr. I. M. Wade   | 112       |
| ,,      Mr. Henry Blessley   | 113       |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <i>Conversazione</i> —The Chair taken by Mr. Joseph Lupton                  | 114 |
| Letter from Mr. C. P. Tiele   | 114 |
| ,, Bishop Ferencza  | 115 |
| ,, Mons. Coquerel   | 115 |
| ,, Signor F. Bracciforti  | 116 |
| Speech of the Chairman  | 116 |
| ,, Rev. James De Normandie  | 118 |
| ,, Dvya das Datta, M.A.   | 119 |
| ,, Mons. Le Pasteur Cyr   | 121 |
| <b>PROCEEDINGS OF THE THIRD DAY—</b>  |     |
| Devotional Service  | 125 |
| <i>Morning Session</i> —Speech of Mr. C. W. Jones                           | 127 |
| Paper on “Our Duties in the Old Universities,”<br>by Dr. W. Blake Odgers    | 127 |
| Discussion : Speech of Rev. R. A. Armstrong                                 | 135 |
| ,, Rev. Andrew Chalmers   | 137 |
| ,, Mr. W. H. Herford  | 139 |
| ,, Rev. J. Page Hopps   | 139 |
| ,, Rev. H. E. Dowson  | 140 |
| ,, Rev. J. E. Odgers  | 140 |
| ,, Mr. Joseph Lupton  | 140 |
| ,, Rev. Dr. Greaves   | 141 |
| ,, Rev. John Robberds   | 141 |
| ,, Rev. Dr. Martineau   | 141 |
| Paper — “A Church Building Loan Fund,” by Mr. A. W.<br>Worthington          | 143 |
| Speech of Rev. Henry Ierson   | 150 |
| Resolution appointing Conference Committee—                                 |     |
| Speech of Mr. David Martineau   | 151 |
| ,, Mr. William Bowring  | 152 |
| Resolution of thanks to the Leeds Local Committee, by Rev. Dr.<br>Martineau | 152 |
| Seconded by Mr. Woollen   | 152 |
| Speech of Mr. A. W. Worthington   | 153 |
| ,, Mr. John S. Mathers  | 153 |
| ,, Mr. J. W. Connell  | 154 |

## INTRODUCTION.

---

At the close of the CONFERENCE held in Birmingham on the 14th, 15th, and 16th April, 1885, a Resolution was passed appointing the following gentlemen a Committee for the management of the next Conference, viz. :—

|                            |                         |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| D. AINSWORTH, Esq., M.P.   | Rev. J. PAGE HOPPS      |
| Rev. R. A. ARMSTRONG, B.A. | C. H. JAMES, Esq., M.P. |
| Rev. H. E. DOWSON, B.A.    | JOSEPH LUPTON, Esq.     |
| Rev. P. W. CLAYDEN         | HERBERT NEW, Esq.       |

*Treasurer :*

T. CHATFEILD CLARKE, Esq., London.

*Honorary Secretaries :*

H. W. CROSSKEY, LL.D., Birmingham.

HARRY RAWSON, Eccles, Manchester.

S. A. STEINTHAL, Manchester.

A. W. WORTHINGTON, Old Swinford, Stourbridge.

It was further resolved that the Conference be held Triennially.

An invitation to hold the Conference of 1888 at Leeds, was subsequently accepted by the Committee, and the Secretaries were instructed to visit Leeds and make needful arrangements with the friends there. On receiving their Report, the Committee proceeded to prepare the Programme of Proceedings.

It was suggested that the proceedings should be extended over four days, instead of three as at the preceding Conferences; but, after due consideration, this idea was abandoned, and the Programme was arranged on the same outline as on previous occasions, as follows :—

## ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS.

TUESDAY, 24TH APRIL, 1888.

At 2-0 p.m.—Reception Room in the Congregational Hall, Mill Hill Chapel, open from 2-0 till 10-0 p.m. Luggage can be deposited in the Schoolroom. Tea in the Royal Exchange Room, close at hand.

At 6-0 p.m.—Communion Service in Mill Hill Chapel, conducted by the Rev. James Drummond, B.A., LL.D.; assisted by the Revs. C. Hargrove, M.A., and A. Chalmers; and Messrs. Richard Enfield and David Martineau.

At 7-30 p.m.—Religious Service in the Town Hall: the Devotional part by the Rev. Professor J. E. Carpenter, M.A.; and the Sermon by the Rev. H. W. Crosskey, LL.D., F.G.S.

WEDNESDAY, 25TH APRIL.

At 9-0 a.m.—Reception Room at the Town Hall, open from 9-0 a.m. till 10-0 p.m.

At 9-30 a.m.—Devotional Service in Mill Hill Chapel, conducted by the Revs. Dendy Agate, B.A., R. C. Dendy, M. S. Dunbar, M.A., and P. M. Higginson, M.A.

At 10-30 a.m.—Conference Opened in the Town Hall; Mr. Frederic Nettlefold in the Chair. Hymn. Paper on "*The Organisation of our Churches*," by the Rev. James Martineau, LL.D., D.D. The Discussion will be opened by Mr. Harry Rawson.

At 1-30 p.m.—Interval.

At 3 p.m.—Sir James Kitson, Bart., Chairman. Hymn. Papers on "*The Obstacles to the Advancement of Free Christianity among the People*," by—(1) The Rev. T. W. Freckleton; (2) Mr. John Dendy, Junr. The Discussion will be opened by Mrs. Louisa Herford and Mr. T. Chatfeild Clarke, F.R.I.B.A.

At 7-30 p.m.—Conversazioné in the Town Hall, under the Presidency of Mr. Joseph Lupton, when the Rev. S. A. Steinthal will propose a Welcome to the Foreign Visitors, viz., Professor Bracciforti, of Milan; Rev. Chase Derzsi, of Buda Pesth; Herr Edward Wavrinsky, President of the Society of Rational Believers in Göteborg; and the Rev. James de Normandie, Chairman of the Council of the American National Conference of Unitarian and other Christian Churches.

## THURSDAY, 26TH APRIL.

At 9 a.m.—Reception Room open at the Town Hall.

At 9-30 a.m.—Devotional Service in Mill Hill Chapel, conducted by the Revs. James Harwood, B.A., W. M. Ainsworth, S. A. Steinthal, and S. F. Williams.

At 10-30 a.m.—Conference in the Town Hall; Mr. C. W. Jones in the Chair. Hymn. Paper on "*Our Duty in the old Universities*," by Dr. W. Blake Odgers. The Discussion will be opened by the Rev. R. A. Armstrong, B.A. Paper on a "*Church Building Loan Fund*," by Mr. A. W. Worthington, B.A., F.S.S. The Discussion will be opened by the Rev. H. Ierson, M.A. Closing Resolutions. Hymn, Prayer, and Benediction.

Evening—Arrangements are being made to hold a Popular Meeting under the Presidency of Sir James Kitson, Bart., when Addresses will be delivered by the Rev. Dr. Crosskey, and the Revs. William Binns, S. A. Steinthal, J. Page Hopps, and T. W. Freckleton; and by Mr. T. Chatfeild Clarke.

All the Meetings will be held in the Town Hall, except the Communion Service and the Morning Devotional Services, which will be in Mill Hill Chapel.

Letters for Members of the Conference may be addressed to the care of the Conference Committee, Reception Room, Town Hall, Leeds. The Local Hon. Secs. are Mr. John S. Mathers, and Mr. J. Wregitt Connon, Hanover House, Leeds.

This Programme was issued, with the following letter of invitation, to the Secretaries of Non-subscribing Churches in the United Kingdom. The same form of invitation, with the requisite modifications, was also sent to ministers and laymen connected with Liberal Churches :—

FEBRUARY, 1888.

To the Secretary of the.....Congregation at.....

DEAR SIR,

At the close of the numerously-attended and successful Conference held at Birmingham in April, 1885, it was resolved that the Conference be convened triennially. A very hearty invitation has been received from Leeds, and arrangements have been accordingly made for the Conference to meet there on the 24th, 25th, and 26th April, 1888.

The Programme, which we send you on the other side, will show that the proceedings of the Conference are likely to be no less interesting than those of previous Meetings. The anticipated presence of the Rev. Dr. Martineau, and the importance of the subject of Organisation which he has undertaken to introduce, will not only make the Meeting specially attractive, but will also be likely to give it an important influence on the future life of our Churches. Nor will the other topics selected for discussion be found lacking in interest. Moreover, several foreign visitors, viz., Professor Bracciforti, of Milan; Herr Edward Wavrinsky, President of the Society of Rational Believers in Göteborg; and probably a representative from the United States, will bring to the Conference first-hand information as to the condition of our Churches in Europe and America.

The two previous Meetings of the Conference have so fully realised the highest hopes which had been formed, that the Committee need not again enlarge upon the advantages which these Assemblies must confer. It remains only to express the hope that the Minister, and as many Members of your Congregation as are able to attend, will be present at the Conference. It is expected that hospitality can be offered for the Minister and One Delegate from each Congregation, provided their names are sent in on the accompanying form, before the 17th of March.

We are, dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

H. W. CROSSKEY,  
HARRY RAWSON,  
S. A. STEINTHAL,  
A. W. WORTHINGTON, } Honorary Secretaries.

Communications relating to the Conference should be addressed to

Mr. WORTHINGTON, Old Swinford, Stourbridge, *Acting Hon. Sec.*

It was intended to have arranged for services to be held in the chapels in the neighbourhood of Leeds, by ministers and laymen attending the Conference, on the evening after its close, as had been done at the Birmingham Conference. This plan was not, however, carried out, lest it should interfere with the arrangements of a

popular meeting which it was determined to hold in the Town Hall, at Leeds, on the 26th April, the evening in question.

The invitations to the Conference were accepted by nearly 200 ministers. About 116 congregational delegates, four foreign ones, and 215 other visitors also sent in their names, making a total of 528. Various causes prevented some from attending, but their absence was fully made up by others who came unannounced, and, including residents at Leeds, probably upwards of 1,000 attended the Sessional Meetings, while a still larger number was present at the Religious Service in the Town Hall on Tuesday evening. The actual numbers for whom hospitality was provided were, 187 ministers, of whom 38 brought their wives ; 138 lay delegates, 19 of whom were accompanied by their wives, and about 158 visitors, making a total of 540 guests entertained by friends at Leeds. It is a notable feature that some of the ministers and other visitors were cordially received by members of the Established Church, and of other denominations. Of the friendly feeling thus shown, a remarkable evidence is given in the fact, that a Unitarian minister was asked to conduct family worship by a clergyman of the Established Church, at whose house he was staying.

The arrangements were universally regarded as excellent. In addition to the provision of refreshments at a moderate tariff, and all the facilities for railway travelling that could be obtained, permission was obtained for the members of the Conference to make use of several Newsrooms, and to visit various Public Institutions and Manufactories. In the arrangements for the hospitable entertainment and convenience of visitors, scarcely an instance of oversight occurred ; if any appeared, it was immediately corrected by the courtesy and energy of the Local Secretaries.

The Committee cannot close this brief account of the proceedings without recording their gratitude for the hearty and ready way in which the duties they imposed upon the large number of ministers and laymen who took part in the proceedings were cheerfully accepted and ably fulfilled ; for the excellence of the local arrangements, so laboriously worked out by the Local Committee, and its numerous Sub-Committees ; and for the generous hospitality, which, in common with a large number of visitors, they heartily enjoyed.



## PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIRST DAY,

TUESDAY, 24TH APRIL, 1888.

---

THE Ministers, Delegates, and Visitors, as they arrived in Leeds, on Tuesday, 24th April, 1888, resorted to the fine Congregational Hall, adjoining the Mill Hill Chapel, which was admirably fitted up as a Reception Room. All the information needed as to hosts, letters, &c., was there afforded by the Local Secretaries, and many happy greetings were exchanged between friends, some of whom met after long intervals of separation. Tea was provided in the Royal Exchange.

---

At six o'clock, the COMMUNION SERVICE was held in Mill Hill Chapel, which recalled, by its architectural beauty, the solemnity of the similar service in Hope Street Church, Liverpool, at the first Conference. It is estimated that about six hundred communicants joined in the service, which was most impressively conducted by the Rev. James Drummond, B.A., LL.D., Principal of Manchester New College. The bread and wine were distributed to the communicants by the venerable Rev. Thomas Hincks, B.A., F.R.S., formerly Minister of the chapel; the Rev. P. H. Wicksteed, M.A., son of a former Minister of the chapel; the Rev. Owen J. Jones, (acting as Minister of the chapel, in the absence, through illness, of its regular minister, the Rev. C. Hargrove, M.A.); and the Rev. A. Chalmers, of Wakefield; and Messrs. Joshua Buckton, late Warden of Mill Hill Chapel; Richard Enfield, of Nottingham; and David Martineau, of London.

At half-past seven o'clock, a large congregation, numbering over a thousand persons, assembled in the Town Hall for a RELIGIOUS SERVICE. The Devotional Service was impressively conducted by the Rev. J. Estlin Carpenter, M.A., Vice-Principal of Manchester New College, and former Minister of Mill Hill Chapel. The Lesson read was I. John, ii. 7-29.

The Sermon was preached by the Rev. H. W. Crosskey, LL.D., F.G.S., of Birmingham.



## S E R M O N.

---

*"Verily, I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence, to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."*—MATTHEW XVII., 20.

---

No more solemn task could be entrusted to a preacher than that which is imposed upon me this evening.

It is now more than thirty-nine years since I began to teach and preach as a Minister of the group of churches, whose representatives, from North and South, and East and West, are now gathered before me.

Have the chequered experiences of these long years given me any message to bring to this Conference?

Ere I speak, I would humbly bow down my soul before that great Spirit, who of old sent one of His seraphims to touch His prophet's lips with living fire from the altar, in beseeching prayer.

Deliver me, O Lord my God! from any desire merely to prophecy smooth things that may be acceptable to men's ears.

Deliver me, from the vain dream that such a one as I am, can be a judge of friends and brethren.

But grant that those thoughts touching these churches and this people, which have grown with my growth, and been strengthened with my strength; which have been quickened by the sunshine of many joys, and watered by the tears of many sorrows, may come to my lips.

Grant that I may utter faithfully what is within my heart of hearts, even as though this earth and all that is dear and precious within it, were fading from my eyes.

And O grant, beyond all things, that although I may have little wisdom to guide, yet that my very foolishness of speech may at least serve to warn away from any path that leadeth to destruction.

---

#### MINISTERS AND LAYMEN,

We meet together as representatives of some three or four hundred churches, known by diverse names such as "Unitarian," "Free Christian," "Presbyterian," in which subscription to no authoritative articles of faith is required, but which are practically bound together by a common history; by natural sympathies; and, to a not inconsiderable extent, by many clear and definite, although unformulated religious convictions.

I shall not attempt, this evening, to state or defend the feelings and principles by which we are distinguished from the members of other Christian Churches, but address myself, frankly and directly, to the clamant necessities—as I apprehend them—of our own life; the responsibilities which rest upon our own shoulders; and the demands made by our own work, upon our energy, our love, and our devotion.

The one want of any body of men associated for religious purposes, at any and every period of its history, is not far to seek.

*In a church no substitute can be found for faith in a living God.*

Granted this faith, the most absurd dogmas may be believed, and the most unlovely ceremonies be performed; but the "church" will live and command, as by divine right, self-sacrificing services from its members. Without this faith, extremely reasonable opinions may be cherished, and thoroughly artistic arrangements may throw a glamour over ornate services of prayer and praise, but "the church" will be more and more grudgingly supported by offerings wrung with difficulty from half-hearted givers; it will sicken and decay until it cumbers the ground and awaits a merciful death at the hands of, it may be bigoted, but God-fearing men.

The first of all the commandments for us, is the first of all commandments for all men who venture to take the awful name of their Creator upon their lips—it is that we should realise more clearly

and profoundly what belief in God means ; and, personally, feel more intensely the ennobling power and the transcendent majesty of the religion we profess.

*We claim freedom for the human mind in the pursuit of Religious Truth !*

It is well. Intellectual liberty within a church is to the soul what free institutions are to a nation,—a condition and an opportunity for its healthful growth. Woe to the nation that makes light of its freedom. To be compelled to submit to the will of others, by armed authority, is degrading ; to feel the spiritual blood of a great country coursing through our veins, so that our own life is its life, and its life is our life, is ennobling. A devout missionary once told me that he noticed a distinct increase of manly feeling among the very poorest when the suffrage was conferred upon them.

Woe to our church should it ever fear to trust the free activity of the mind of man ! Even a true creed (could such be found), imposed as a condition of spiritual fellowship, would be a bondage too hard to bear. The slave is none the less a slave when a comfortable house is provided for him, with a due supply of food and clothing ; and the soul is none the less outraged when compelled by some external authority to profess the very truth itself, or abandon the house in which it loves to pray. The question is not between truth and error, but between spiritual independence and slavery.

*We attempt to think out a rational system of theology ; and would fain persuade the world to accept it !*

Again, it is well. I know that a cry is up in England : “Give us no more theology ;—we are weary of it ?” Without a doubt, this impatience of theology has been amply justified by the persistence with which it has been confounded with religion. The very love of God has been made dependent upon the solution of a large number of difficult biblical, historical, and metaphysical problems which have not the slightest connection with purity of heart, noble self-sacrifice, and adoring reverence.

I may or may not believe that Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden ; or that types of Christ are contained in the Book of Genesis ; or that the Lord of the Universe took part in the direction of

fierce Jewish wars ; or that Daniel recorded, in mystic phrase, the fate of coming empires ;—and yet I may strive to do my duty to God and man !

My heart may be so conquered by the beauty of Christ's holiness that the one question I may ask touching my thoughts and actions is, “Would they be approved by him ?” And yet, I may or may not think it historically proved that he walked upon the waves and raised the dead ; or be able precisely to define his personal relationship to the infinite source of all being.

When I study the development of Christian doctrine, I do not find that the lines drawn by the critical intellect, between sect and sect, correspond with those that separate righteousness from iniquity ; neither do I find that the holy saints, who have triumphed over temptation, have always accepted one set of dogmas, and that all degraded sinners have held theological opinions at variance with those professed by the saints. There are heretical and orthodox saints,—just as there are also heretical and orthodox sinners.

The conclusion is inevitable ; our critical theories about the Trinity, the Atonement, the Bible, do not reveal what we love and what we reverence ; and give no indication as to whether we have or have not consecrated our lives to the service of man and God.

Although theology is not religion, I know not why, however, we should abandon the effort to think intelligently touching divine sanctities.

If utterly irrational “believers” may be devoutly religious—and who can deny that the light of God pierces through the densest clouds of superstition ?—surely rational people may be religious also.

It can not be an act of gracious homage to an infinitely wise God to declare that we care nothing as to what human errors may be regarded as the light of His truth, or what follies may be committed in His most holy name.

By virtue of the intellectual powers with which we are endowed, we justly deem it unworthy of our manhood to remain in contented ignorance of any fact, however trivial, that *can* be ascertained, whether with respect to this earth and its history, or the story hidden in the remotest depths of space ;—how, then, can indifference as to what is

credible or incredible regarding the awful Power of Powers by whom all things are sustained, be esteemed a noble attitude of mind?

To quote the words of a great statesman: "Those who take for the burden of their song, 'Respect religion, but despise theology,' seem to me just as rational as if a person were to say, 'Admire the trees, the plants, the flowers, the sun, moon, or stars, but despise botany and despise astronomy.' Theology is ordered knowledge, representing, in the region of the intellect, what religion represents in the heart and life of man."\*

But our work as men and women associated for religious purposes, is not exhausted,—nay, it can hardly be said to have fairly commenced,—when we have justified free inquiry and stated the first principles (according to our faith) of a rational theology. Do you ask what remains to be done? I reply, nothing less than to bring our souls into contact with the spirit of the living God, and to apply His laws to the direction of our own conduct and the redemption of the world from its iniquities.

To understand what this means, read the Gospels and Epistles and drop out of mind every text and passage which has been a battle-field on which contending sects have fought for mastery. What remains? A religion that is the appeal of justice against injustice; of love against hatred; of humanity against inhumanity; of immortal hope against despair. As Jesus Christ spake, men cried "We have been under the shadow of a great darkness, but now the day spring from on high has visited us. We have been dead in our trespasses and sins, but now we feel the stirrings of a new life, and are born again. We have been hopeless of escape from the burden of our transgressions, but now we know all the sweetness of an unwearied mercy. We have been as wandering prodigals, we are now welcomed home to our Father's mansion. The world has prevailed against us, and we have been the slaves of the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, but now we lift up our trustful prayer to a Lord whose will may be done in earth as it is in heaven." Against the strength of passionate wickedness; the madness of rebellious wilfulness; the shows and shams and hypocrisies

---

\* W. E. Gladstone, *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1886.

of social life ; the tyrannies of priesthoods, principalities, and powers, Jesus Christ asserted the almighty ness of an infinitely tender mercy ; the sweetness of an undying love ; the authority of an unconquerable righteousness. He sought the realities of life, and found them in the sanctities of God. The outcast, hearing a voice tenderly laden with the promise of forgiveness, believed its message, and found peace. Those bearing heavy burdens forgot their weariness, as it was revealed to them that they were children of a Father who will give good things to them that ask Him, and will not substitute a serpent for a fish, or a stone for bread. Becoming Christ's disciple, the slave knew himself the free citizen of a kingdom of heaven, and the poor man was endowed with wealth which neither moth nor rust could corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.

Such was the blessedness that came to those who yielded to the power of Christ—such the blessedness that is now and ever will be, when the soul of man is brought face to face with the spirit of the living God.

Our grave and besetting danger is, lest—in the necessity that has been laid upon us to secure our freedom and to apply human reason to the dogmas of the churches, and in our zeal to deny ancient superstitions—a denial that I am the last of men to say should not be made—we should fail to understand how infinitely more important it is to feel the overwhelmingly awful reality of God, than to reject even the absurdest article of faith ; and lest the Lord of life should thus become to us merely the last link in a chain of argument, instead of a Presence and a Power that can not be put by.

Here are we in this world, through no action of our own. To the Power that placed us in this small star on the outskirts of space, we *must* have a real and not a purely speculative relationship. We ourselves are not Lords of Creation. The universe is in the hands of another Authority than ours—vaster, to Infinity. This is a great and indisputable fact. We may call this Supreme Power by whatever name we choose—Jehovah—Jove—Nature—God ; but *it is* the “I am that I am.”

What can man do as man ?

Man can not add any material of the size of an atom to the world ;

he can not increase by an infinitesimal fraction, the sum of the forces acting around him, or make them swerve a hair's breadth from their appointed courses. So far as his dealings with this earth are concerned, it is clear, man is *not* his own master.

Another series of facts is patent. We can not change the laws dominant over mind, heart, and over science, any more than the laws of light, heat, and electricity. The Power without us is within us also. Thoughts, feelings, actions, are as seeds ; they bring forth fruit after their kinds. Let any man try to reverse the beatitudes. Let him say, “*I will* be blessed, but I will be clamant, selfish, and grasping ; *I will* be blessed, but I will be proud ; *I will* be blessed, but I will hunger and thirst after iniquity ; *I will* be blessed, but I will be harsh, ungenerous and cruel ; *I will* be blessed, but I will indulge my licentious passions.”

What will be the result ? The shadow of a great and terrible darkness will fall upon his soul. Sooner or later, in agony, he will call upon the mountains to cover him and hide him.

Look upon the world at large—*is it* governed by kings and emperors and Houses of Parliament ? The laws upon which social order and progress depend are as independent of human legislation as those that guide the stars. If kings and emperors and Houses of Parliament observe the laws which are established for them, and not by them, nations enjoy prosperity and peace. If they thwart and deny them, the whirlwind brings desolation. The strongest government upon earth, a government capable of enforcing its decrees to the uttermost by fine, imprisonment, torture, exile, death, can not outrage the Ten Commandments with impunity. So far as it attempts the task, it stores up for itself a terrible vengeance. There is a King of kings, a Lord of lords—and the King of kings and Lord of lords is the Eternal Justice enthroned above all height.

The revolutions, which from time to time startle the civilised world with their horrors, are not mere outbursts of human wickedness, to be put down by armies, and so ended. It might as well be said that the bursting of the boiler of an engine is due to the inherent wickedness of fire and water. Every horrible social catastrophe has its source in the passions aroused by the wrong-doing of some human government,

which has acted as though it could manage, as it liked, this earth of God's.

The prophets were no mistaken enthusiasts, when they cried, "The Lord enters into judgment with his people." Whenever a state of society, like that described by Isaiah, exists—in which evil is called good, and good, evil ; the wicked are justified for reward ; and men and women follow strong drink, and walk with wanton eyes ;—no other words can describe its coming fate than those which sprang from his tongue : "Therefore, as the fire devoureth the stubble and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust ; because they have cast away the law of the Lord of Hosts."

In the presence of these tremendous facts, all other interests are dwarfed into insignificance. What have we, the children of men, to do but to bind ourselves as closely as we may to this Being of Beings, in whose great hands we stand ; and strive reverently and prayerfully, through our minds, to gain the truth of His truth ; through our hearts, the love of His love ; through our consciences, the righteousness of His righteousness ?

Men and brethren ! Heretics as we are—rejecters of many creeds in vogue in Christendom—our chiefest need is to escape from the attitude of critics and controversialists ; to know that, indeed and of a truth, we have a religion ; and to worship with lowlier awe, the God and Father of the one family in earth and heaven.

*More reverence* would strengthen our weak hands and confirm our feeble knees. The reverent soul, worshipping a supreme holiness, can never be satisfied with its best achievements. There are two kinds of discontent. There is the paltry and unworthy discontent, which is a grumbling dissatisfaction with the work given us to do, the rewards allotted to us, and the honours bestowed upon us. There is a noble discontent, which springs from a profound reverence for the holiness we have not—such holiness as shone upon the world, like the mid-day sun, in the life of Christ.

It is the discontent of the most richly endowed man of genius, who always believes that his best work could be better done. It is the discontent of the humblest Christian, who, like the publican in the

temple, stands afar off and beats his breast, and cries, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" Spiritual growth is made possible by the discontent of reverence. The reverent soul alone feels the full shame of sin. To him, life is a sacred gift, and is so upbound with a supreme and everlasting righteousness, that it is a terrible thing to stain its purity. Our worst sins are committed through lack of reverence for the sanctity of life. How could men pollute their bodies did they esteem themselves temples of God? How could we play fast and loose, with truth and falsehood, justice and injustice, generosity and meanness, selfishness and self-sacrifice, as our interests, passions, tastes, conveniences, circumstances, may prompt, did we sufficiently honour ourselves as living souls dowered by the Creator of heaven and earth with power to see the light of His light, feel the love of His love, and be His fellow-workers in the hastening of His kingdom? Surely, to sin would then be to us worse than to fill a cathedral with rubbish and filth!

Only the reverent soul can so honour humanity—the common life all men share—as to be faithful and unfaltering in its service.

Reverence for humanity is the overflowing fountain whose waters strengthen for self-devoted toil for the welfare of our brethren, and cure us of an enervating weariness and despair. A lady nurse was asked how she could touch patients wretchedly afflicted with the most loathsome and offensive and pestilential of diseases. She replied that, she saw in each patient an image of Christ. Reverence for the Christ hidden in the depths of the most sinful heart, can alone nerve to tenderest care.

By reverence, we are taught the worth, whether possible or actual, of the most ordinary men and women. In common life, what depths of affection; what struggles to do right; what pitiable woes; what blessed joys are hidden. Go into the worst streets of our towns, enter the slovenly-kept dwellings, the petty hucksters' shops, the public-houses at the corners; the same tragedies and comedies are being there played as in the mansions and palaces of the land—but only the soul reverencing man, as man, has eyes to see the glory of God amid the sordid surroundings; and ears to hear, amidst the babble of coarse and vulgar talk, the low undertones of the melodies of heaven.

Ah ! I know some, in our day and generation, are sometimes tempted to say—"What is the use of our churches ? Certainly, in times past they have helped to secure us our liberties, and have taught us to think ; but now, are they not played out, is not their purpose answered ?" I reply, that they have only begun to discharge their divine work and exercise their grandest functions. We have fought and won our battle for civil and religious liberty ; *now*, we enter upon the task of establishing houses of worship for those who have flung aside their bondage to mediæval ceremonies and thought-restricting creeds.

Let our toils cease ; let no trouble be taken to provide houses of prayer in which the advancing knowledge of the world can find a welcome ; let the inevitable decay of the doctrines current in past generations be accompanied by no strenuous efforts to bow down men's hearts before the Power of Powers, whose laws, whether we acknowledge them or not, are yet the actual laws under which we live, and move, and have our being ;—and we shall do our best to hasten the coming of an epoch of irreverence as the end of our boasted modern progress !

Dare we, by indifference, carelessness, and neglect, do even our small part towards the bringing nearer such a day ? An irreverent people would be a people whose fiercer and wilder passions would be largely released from control. Each man would claim to be a law unto himself. The whims and fancies of irreverent men are their guides ;—they acknowledge no authority in earth or heaven as supreme over their own desires. Were there no reverence for the lives of the meanest and most degraded, who would suffer, as ten thousand martyrs have suffered, to redeem them from their woes ? The decay of reverence would be a catastrophe to civilisation.

As we clearly understand that the dominant and supreme purpose for which we are bound together is the cherishing of lowly reverence for the Creator of the boundless, star-filled universe, of whose will the laws of Nature are the clear revelation ;—the Father of our souls, who has made us capable of thinking, loving, and doing our duty ;—the King of nations, by obedience to whose commandments alone will there be peace on earth, good-will among men,—we shall arise with new-born energy for our glorious work !

Our churches will exercise a three-fold function.

“The law in our members,”—our hot passions and rebellious wills,—are ever struggling against a divine spirit within us, that pleads for a Christ-like life!

Should we happily escape from open and avowed offences against the law of God, a hundred influences are ever dragging us down to the low level of ordinary wordly respectability. Our thoughts, feelings, and actions are cribbed, cabined, and confined within the narrow boundaries which represent the average standard of conduct approved by the small social circle in which we move. The characters of few of us grow, as they might, from grace to grace.

By reverent worship, aspiration is uplifted, and an effort, at least, aroused to attain the full stature of the perfect man.

Fools only can make a mock of the world’s sin. Luxury and licentiousness,—such luxury and such licentiousness as have ere now cast down mighty empires into the dust,—abound in our midst!

The service of Mammon is not unknown in our marts of living industry—neither is the haste to be rich; be the cost to the soul what it may. If England is not to share the fate of Babylon, it can only be by the preservation of personal purity; by simple living and higher thinking; by sweeter affections; by fuller delight in the beauty of holiness; by larger esteem for the riches of the Kingdom of Heaven as infinitely more precious than the riches of the world.

Since all the riches of this world  
May be gifts from the devil and earthly kings,  
I should suspect that I worshipped the devil,  
If I thanked my God for worldly things.

The countless gold of a merry heart,  
The rubies and pearls of a loving age,  
The idle man never can bring to the mart,  
Nor the cunning hoard up in his treasury.

When we worship God, our faith that His will may be done in earth as it is in heaven is sustained, and we are strengthened to toil more faithfully and deliver the village, town or city in which we dwell from anything that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie.

Human Brotherhood — is it an empty rhetorical phrase or a momentous fact? Alas! what a sarcasm upon modern social life, do the words “all ye are brethren” often seem to be.

What! the child in the gutter, learning to swear as it learns to speak, the *brother* of the darling of a well-appointed home; the drunkard and the criminal, the *brethren* of honest and reputable citizens; the poor man out of work, and who knows what it is to pray for daily bread for his children, and receive no answer, the *brother* of the millionaire—*is it credible?*

There is one place in the wide world—and I know but one—in which we are compelled to believe that so indeed it is; and that place is the Church of God.

We dare not address our prayers to any private and peculiar God of the well-doing, the fortunate, and the prosperous. In hours of worship, we bow down before the one great Father of all sorts and conditions of men.

In the near future, problems will have to be solved which are the perplexity of every man with a human heart. Our present social system has no firmer elements of stability in it, than had the age of chivalry. No one can yet say what changes are impending, and how human brotherhood will become a realised fact. But this much is certain—until we truly and devoutly believe, not as a perfunctory doctrine but as a living truth, that all men *are* brethren—no guiding light will fall upon our steps.

In proportion as we understand the full meaning of our fellowship as worshippers of God, we shall be delivered from the fears and anxieties, and also from certain somewhat ignoble tendencies of thought and feeling, by which, as members of a few isolated and unpopular churches, we are in danger of being beset.

It is clear that the world at large has not yet received the Gospel we preach.

The seer of Patmos prophesies of the New Jerusalem, he saw in sublime vision descending out of heaven, that “the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it;” no such signs present themselves that the tabernacle of God is with us. Many of our churches have to toil bravely for dear life itself; and even the most prosperous are not filled with eager crowds.

Interested as we are in our own affairs, the great world rolls on almost as heedless of our existence as Rome was of the coming of Christ of Nazareth.

Our laymen know that they gain no social advantage or honour by worshipping within our churches. Whatever repute they happily possess, has been won in spite of, and not because of their religion.

Many, many of you, my brethren in the ministry, understand only too well what it is to labour on, from year to year, in poverty and loneliness ; by the world unpraised ; and uncheered by the sympathy of any Christian worshippers, save the two or three who assemble with you.

In times past, this antagonism of the world to our religion was the strength, and almost the gladly-accepted glory of our churches. God be praised, a capacity for heroic deeds is hidden within human hearts, which only requires a challenge to be called into sublime activity. When the early Christians were thrown to the lions, a great company of men and women declared that to the lions they would be thrown rather than pour libations to unhallowed idols.

The pains and penalties to which our fathers were subjected did but render them more joyously determined to offer their sacrifices and prayers at their chosen altar. They shared the spirit of the “happy warrior,”

“ . . . who, if called upon to face  
Some awful moment to which heaven has joined  
Great issues, good or bad for human kind,  
Is happy as a lover, and attired  
With sudden brightness, like a man inspired.”

On the Sunday following the destruction, by an infuriated mob, of the “Meeting House” in Birmingham, of which Priestley was the minister, his undaunted congregation met again for worship and joined in the gleeful hymn :—

We'll crowd thy gates, with thankful songs,  
High as the heavens our voices raise ;  
And earth with her ten thousand tongues,  
Shall fill thy courts with sounding praise.

Now, however, that we are free citizens of a free state ; that our

churches are in no danger of the flames ; that we may legally profess either Unitarian or any other opinions we choose ; the old heroic joyfulness at being thought worthy to suffer for conscience' sake is in danger of giving place to a spirit of restlessness and annoyance because the world is not with us.

A vague feeling of uneasiness, coming from the fact that a large measure of outward, visible and tangible success has not been ours, may be detected, like a canker in the bud, among our churches.

The advice given by Satan to David has occasionally been taken ; and our people have been numbered.

The brave soldier-king at Agincourt made the fewness of his forces a ground for lofty appeal to their valour, and would not wish another man from England.

If we are marked to die, we are now  
To do our country loss ; and if to live,  
The fewer men, the greater share of honour.

But from our ranks the cry, " How few we are !—how few we are !" is at times uttered in complaining, not to say querulous tones.

Alas for us ! if our condition should ever be described by a reversal of the words of Paul :—" We are *not* troubled by any human interference with our freedom of thought and action, yet we are distressed ; we are *not* persecuted, save occasionally in a petty and ungenerous way, yet we ask whether we are *not* forsaken."

This kind of despondent discontent, should it increase, can only have fatally enervating and ignominious results.

It will send abroad a spirit of captious criticism, and induce us, like children, to pull up our flowers by the roots, to see if they are growing.

It will render us impatient of those slow methods of culture through which the God, who has flung ages upon the accumulation of a sand bank or a mound of clay, leads onwards the thoughts of men.

It will lead us to treat our churches as shops, in which we must expose the wares most likely to attract the eyes of passers by ; and keep on sale the articles of faith most largely in demand, modifying them as the fashion of the day may direct.

It will make us worldly wise, in the meanest sense, and teach us to

value our fellow-worshippers by their wealth and station, and not by the worth of their souls.

Thackeray describes the chapel at Blenheim as being “dedicated to God and the Duke of Marlborough;” and adds that the monument to the latter occupies almost the whole place, so that the former is quite secondary. THIS is the sign and type of the spirit that will prevail among our churches, should worldly success become the god of our idolatry.

Various prescriptions not unnaturally occur to our minds as efficacious for the renewal of our life.

See ! how men, in these modern days, are attracted by ceremonies. They seem to want some formal highway to the courts of heaven. Appeals to the conscience appear to be too vague to move them. Can we not institute more ceremonies of our own, and thus gain power ?

Yet, after all, the soul must seek after God *before* a ceremony has any worth—and when the soul does seek after God, a ceremony may be performed or neglected without endangering nobleness of life. Its efficacy simply depends upon personal taste and feeling, and has no deeper root. It may be useful to some, and useless to others. I have read of a true saint of God—now a cardinal of the Catholic Church—who, while he was a member of the Church of England, was voyaging in a yacht in the Mediterranean. On the cabin table he kept a compass, and, when engaged in his devotions, kept his eye upon it, that he might be sure he addressed his prayers towards the East—that is, to Jerusalem, and not to Rome. But those prayers surely ascended to the throne of God, because they were uttered by a noble soul, and not because his breath wafted them eastward.

Moreover, if there be one thing clear in the religious history of man, it is *this*—that elaborate ceremonies, performed, as they may be, by the worst of sinners, as by the sweetest of saints—prove at last, as their novelty passes, but veils beneath which men can hide their transgressions until the awful condemnation falls: “Woe unto you, scribes, pharisees, hypocrites, for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which, indeed, outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.”

Not here—not here—is the innermost secret of revival.

See ! what crowds fill the churches in which gorgeous, and mystic, and melodious performances charm the taste and appeal to the imagination. Can we not, also, press art into our service, and produce the same result ?

Yes ! if any one of our churches chose to spend money enough, and engage Patti to sing, and Hallé's band to play, it would be filled to suffocation ; and I know not why we should not worship God in the beauty of holiness. I grant, at once, that we are too niggardly in our offerings, and tolerate surroundings in a church which would not be endured at home. Yet, there may be an artistic service *without* the worship of God ; and, by its enchantments, the soul may be smitten with blindness and remain in ignorance of its real sins and its lack of faith ; while, when the worshipper feels that the living Spirit of the Eternal is near unto him, pardoning, comforting, sustaining, guiding, the heavens will open, and he will see the glory thereof, although he may sing the simplest of hymns to the simplest of tunes, and his house of prayer may be but as a barn.

Not here—not here—is the innermost secret of revival.

See ! again, how the world listens to those whose theology is "broad," but who do not startle their listeners by the use of notoriously heretical phrases. Surely we do not link new thoughts to ancient forms of faith, with sufficient closeness to make them acceptable.

It is one thing, however, and altogether honourable, for men, who through temperament and education, find that they can express their religious faith best in the language of old creeds, to use it ; it is another, and an unworthy thing, with set and conscious purpose, to use words which the speaker well knows will convey one meaning to one section of his hearers, and the opposite to another.

Mediators between the present and the past, are of God ; and do His work ; He also raises up prophets who speak sometimes with fierce energy and always without vagueness, the message that burns within their souls and *will* flame forth from their tongues.

The prophet must wait long for the fulfilment of his words ; he must bear reproach and mockery ; often and often will men say to him, "Where is thy God ?" He must be prepared to die unheeded and rejected ; but without the prophet's faithfulness what would the world's history have been ?

Not here—not here—is the innermost secret of revival. The spirit of prophecy must not be quenched ; as we believe, so must we speak.

The secret of revival—the secret which all our hearts are longing to know, as the earth thirsts for the sweet rain of spring—where, then, is it to be found ?

We profess to believe in God and to be followers of Christ ; by prayerful faithfulness ; by abundant self-sacrifices ; by heedlessness of the world's verdict ; by joyfulness in enduring trial ; by undespering labours in season and out of season ; by patient waiting for the growth in God's good time of the seed we scatter ; our profession of belief must prove itself a sublime reality.

A modern artist once visited the Vatican, and spent hours alone with Michael Angelo and Raphael, and came to the conclusion that these two men were unrivalled and unapproachable. But the study of their works brought the conviction that the painters implicitly believed in the divine truth of the themes they illustrated. Nothing else (he writes) notwithstanding their God-gifted genius, could have inspired them, and, difficult as it is to think that Raphael really took it for granted that Saints, armed with long swords, appeared in the sky at the moment when fortune was going against one of the Popes in battle, and so turned the tables on his enemies, the assumption must be allowed. Only through real belief did the artist's consummate genius arise in the fulness of its glory.

Either there is a God, or there is not ; either we are bound to strive to be Christ-like, or we are not ; either this world can be delivered from its iniquities, or it cannot.

If there be no God ;—if the Christ-like life be a vain and empty dream ; if evil things are for ever to hold full sovereign sway and masterdom over the nations,—let us close the doors of our churches ; and no longer make the empty pretence of prayer. But, if there be a God,—if to become Christ-like is the one aspiration we can justify to our hearts and consciences ;—if this world can be covered with righteousness, as the waters over the face of the deep,—*then* what shame is hidden in laggardness of service and indifference,—what devotion can be too glowing,—what toil can be too severe,—what self-sacrifice can be too complete !

In my soul of souls, I believe that the revival of the life of our churches can be found but in *one* thing,—in a fuller, richer, tenderer, more intensely personal faith in the Lord of perfect righteousness and immortal love, whose Presence and whose Power we do not venture to deny.

Pervaded by this faith, we shall find unutterable blessedness, joy, and peace in our homes of prayer and praise, whether two or three are gathered therein ; or whether thousands give or withhold their responsive sympathies.

Guided by this faith, we shall press forward towards the prize of our high calling,—the stainless glory of Christ !

Animated by this faith, we shall not be content to look on as idle and curious spectators while the awful battle between righteousness and iniquity is being fought out upon the stage of every living soul, and upon the larger field of this world's history.

Disobedience to the law of God will be to us so terrible a catastrophe, and purity of heart so priceless a gain, that wheresoever there is wickedness, personal, social, or national, there shall we be labourers for its cleansing.

Conquered by this faith, we shall be the servants of all who suffer wrong,—of all who are desolate and afflicted ; of all who are neglected and forsaken ; of all who are unfortunate and hopeless ; of all who are weary and broken-hearted ;—that, through mortal love, they may receive the message of immortal mercy !

Triumphing in this faith—we shall worship God in that temple which we are ; and so live, that by our living the day shall be brought nearer when the kingdom of this world shall become His kingdom and He shall reign for ever and ever.

I hear—I hear—a voice that seems to my trembling heart to come from a world unseen—crying aloud unto our churches, however poor, small, disregarded and unhonoured among men they may be, and saying : “ Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; yea, lift them up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory ? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.”

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECOND DAY,

WEDNESDAY, 25TH APRIL, 1888.

---

A DEVOTIONAL SERVICE was held at MILL HILL CHAPEL, at half-past nine, on WEDNESDAY MORNING. The arrangements were confided to the care of the Rev. Dendy Agate, B.A., Gorton, who had invited the aid of the Revs. R. C. Dendy, of Tenterden ; M. S. Dunbar, M.A., of Evesham, and P. M. Higginson, M.A., of Monton. Circumstances, unfortunately, prevented the attendance of the Rev. R. C. Dendy, and his place was supplied by the Rev. John Mc.Dowell, of Pendleton.

A large congregation enjoyed this interesting and solemn service.



## THE MORNING SESSION

OF the Conference was held at half-past ten o'clock, in the Town Hall. A large audience joined in singing the opening hymn.

The Chairman was FREDERIC NETTLEFOLD, Esq., of London, who called upon the acting Hon. Sec., Mr. A. W. Worthington, to read the following letter from the Rev. C. Hargrove :—

FOREST Row,

*23rd April, 1888.*

GENTLEMEN,

Will you kindly express to the Members of the Conference my great regret that I am not able to join with my congregation in giving them welcome to Leeds.

I arrived in England last Friday, I hope completely restored to health. But the friends I consulted agreed that it would be very unwise to submit my new regained strength to so severe a first trial as would inevitably be the strain and excitement of a Conference, which brings together so very many of my friends, and discusses questions in which I take the deepest interest.

I have, therefore, felt it my painful duty to absent myself; and can only express, from this distance, my earnest desire that this Meeting may tend to draw closer the old bonds of intellectual and religious sympathy by which our free churches have been so long united, and that the discussions may be profitable to the good old cause of "Reverent Free Thought."

I am, Gentlemen, .

Yours very sincerely,

CHARLES HARGROVE.

*To the Secretaries of the Conference.*

The CHAIRMAN then said :—The Rev. H. Enfield Dowson has a resolution to propose.

The Rev. H. ENFIELD DOWSON, B.A. (Gee Cross, near Manchester), said :—Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am requested to move :

"That this National Conference of Free Christian Churches, whose first Meeting was opened at Liverpool by the Rev. Charles Beard, LL.D., with a

sermon full of noble vindication of their principles, cannot enter on its business to-day without expressing their profound sorrow at his death. That its Members, gathered from the length and breadth of the kingdom, recognise the unspeakable loss which has befallen their churches in the removal from their midst of one whose memory will never die, so long as their highest and truest traditions last ; and whose Christian Ministry was one long record of lofty talents consecrated to the service of God and man, with a power and self-devotion that never faltered or failed.”

It is impossible for us to meet to-day without recalling, with inexpressible grief, the irreparable loss which has befallen our churches in the death of him who bore the beloved and honoured name of Charles Beard. As we think of him, our hearts are too full for speech. We can hardly realise, as yet, that our dear friend, with his wealth of high faculty and with his abounding human force, has passed for ever from the scene on which he so nobly did his part. Alas, the curtain has fallen upon his strenuous Christian life ; and we who are left behind feel that, with his departure from our midst, we have lost the presence with us of inspiration and joy. Here to-day, then, with reverent affection, and deeper than lips can tell, we would lay upon his tomb the garland of this tribute from the churches whose standard he bore with so true a hand, and whose Ministry found in him so splendid a representative. We remember to-day his loving service of God and man. We remember his Christian self-devotion. We remember the moving eloquence with which he so often touched our hearts, and lifted up our lives. We thank God that he lived to serve our cause ; and we pray that his labours may not have been in vain in the Lord.

Mr. HERBERT NEW (Evesham) seconded the proposition. He said :—  
Mr. Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—We are poorer to-day for the absence of our dear and honoured friend. We are richer for ever for the great work that he has done in our midst. The voice of grief cannot be expressed carelessly or idly. It is a grief that you all feel as I do,—remembering many, many occasions when that brilliant and devout spirit spoke to us from the depths of his genial heart, joined us, and hallowed us in our social gatherings, gave us a name in the Universities and in the other churches, and has left us a precious legacy. We remember him, and we cannot forget him. I second this motion—this reverent resolution in the name of you all.

The CHAIRMAN :—Ordinary forms must be dispensed with. I think the best way of passing this resolution will be by one still and quiet moment.

The CHAIRMAN : Ladies and Gentlemen,—The crowded state of the Hall this morning testifies to the great interest which is shown in the subject of the paper that our revered leader, Dr. Martineau, is to give us. The subject is indeed one of immense importance. We all know and feel the weakness that arises from the want of cohesion and organisation among our Free Churches, consequent on that love of freedom and liberty which characterises not only each congregation amongst us, but which is the boast of every individual member of each congregation. Can any organisation be devised which, while binding our churches together with no mere rope of sand, shall be at the same time so elastic in its construction that no friction or pressure shall be felt at any point ? No ecclesiastical organisation that I am aware of has ever succeeded in doing this. Power to control has always been retained—a power that might be, and generally has been, exercised in a very high-handed and despotic manner. Certainly, such a controlling power would assist materially in binding our congregations together, more into one body ; but it could only retain them so long as each felt it was a gainer, and derived some benefit from the enforced adhesion. How far the benefit derived could rightly weigh in the balance against the freedom and liberty sacrificed, would depend on the power of the organisation, and, more still, on the tact and ability of its governors. We have come together to-day, no doubt, with many preconceived opinions on the subject. For myself, the difficulties that seem to arise appear to be so great as to be almost insuperable. Yet I am certain that, in some way or another, all difficulties will be successfully overcome by Dr. Martineau in the Paper which he is about to read to us. I hope we shall come to the discussion of that Paper with minds free from all preconceived opinions, so that we shall not run into the by-paths of individual crotches, but that we shall earnestly endeavour to discover and, if possible, agree upon some means of strengthening our churches, and enabling them to maintain, with still greater success in the future, those principles which we all hold dear. I have heard it said, on many sides, that it would be a great pity to disturb any existing institution, in order to make more room for a new and untried one. Probably that is a side issue which it will not be necessary to discuss. I, for one, extremely regret that all the members of all our churches cannot heartily support the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. I believe the affairs of that Association are managed in as broad and liberal and impartial a manner as possible. But if that be not the case, and if there be anything in the constitution of that Institution, or the way in which its affairs are administered, which can be rightly altered or may be improved, surely it would be better for us to endeavour to do so, rather than destroy an Institution in which many of us are extremely interested, and which we consider is doing a fair amount

of good work. But others, I know, are not of this opinion ; and it cannot be denied that there are many amongst us who hold aloof from that Association because they consider it to be an essentially dogmatic one. Well, now, there being this difference of opinion amongst us, let us seize the present opportunity of considering whether a new organisation cannot wisely be formed, and which we all of us can join. We are but a small army united ; but if we are told off into sections, our strength is sorely diminished and frittered away. The existence of the British and Foreign Association need not interfere with the formation of the new organisation. Both could exist together ; and if, in course of time, it be found that only one be necessary, then that which is doing the best, the strongest and healthiest work, will, following the natural law of the survival of the fittest, continue ; the other, which is not wanted, will as naturally die away. But, putting on one side all personal predilection for this or that particular institution, or this or that particular name, let us come to the consideration of the paper this morning with the one purpose of considering whether any organisation of our Free Churches be possible or advisable. And if we decide upon that, perhaps we may be able to map out some lines which that organisation should follow. And if we decide to organise, let no one stand aloof ; let the new organisation be on so wide and broad a basis, that every one of us can join. Let us number its members by thousands and by tens of thousands. While we ask the wealthy amongst us to contribute to its support according to their means, let not a high rate of subscription be the test of membership ; but let the shillings give equal rights with the guinea, in the conduct of its affairs ; and thus try and make the National Association for our body one which, if every individual member brings all the individual zeal and earnestness of which he is capable, we shall make into a stronghold, a centre of real strength and usefulness for our weaker churches.

The Rev. JAMES MARTINEAU, LL.D., D.D., was enthusiastically received by the audience, on rising to read his Paper,—

#### SUGGESTIONS ON CHURCH ORGANISATION.

AN enquiry addressed to me by a friend deeply interested in the well-being of our small country congregations, drew from me last year, a private letter somewhat despondent about their case, on the ground that the only effectual remedies for their weakness seemed placed, by our usages, hopelessly out of reach. My friend begged and obtained permission to use that letter as part of a communication of his to the " Provincial Assembly of Lancashire and Cheshire Ministers," which, when I knew it, was as little public as our correspondence itself. But the proceedings got into the papers, letter and all, with two results equally unexpected ; that some hasty expressions, adequate to a friend

with whom *verbum sat*, were totally misunderstood ; and, on the other hand, that the undeveloped hints of what might have been, and might still be, were we wise and brave enough to mend our ways, called forth a large and opened-minded response. Nothing had been further from my thought than to give occasion to either dissension or reform ; but when pressed by an appeal to lay to rest, or turn to account, the disturbance I had caused, I could not disown my responsibility ; and so appear before you now to re-state the original problem, and offer what appears to me its only complete solution.

In doing so, I shall proceed upon the following *assumptions*, as accepted among us :—

1. That the religious constituencies here represented have *objects in common* to consult about, and are conscious of a fundamental affinity.
2. That, in coming together here through you, they are feeling their way *towards co-operation*, as the natural fruit of this consciousness.
3. That, so far as they do this, they are not afraid of quitting their isolation, and becoming *One Church in many places*.
4. That they are congregations of Christian worshippers, under *a regularly elected ministry*.
5. That, wherever the same kind of work is being done in many places, there is *economy in combining to secure the best machinery for it throughout* ; and this is the function of “*organisation*.”

The statement of these assumptions suffices to set aside certain prevalent *misconceptions* : e.g., it has been supposed, and said,

(1.) That organisation is *relied upon as the source of life*, whereas dead elements can never become organic. That illusion cannot be charged *here*, where we pre-suppose a visible movement of *souls astir towards religious union*, and anxious only to *save the waste of living power*, by blending instead of scattering the action of its enthusiasm.

(2.) That organisation in religious bodies *cramps development*. Answer : Yes, if *what you organise* be *doctrines and stereotyped forms*, as watchwords of union ; but not, if it be *labour and sacrifice* for approved common ends ; *work, not thought*.

(3.) That there are, in modern society, new unorganised impulses of humane and ideal enthusiasm, outside the existing religious limits, and superior to the inner life of churches. Answer : Whoever thinks

so may freely give himself to the requirements of that external field ; the more he spends his zeal in it, the more will he find himself engaged in *organising the unorganised impulses*. Whatever promise he may read in the future, the churches of Christendom are not gone yet. Among them, we occupy one small province ; and so long as we are responsible for its culture, it is incumbent upon us to do its work in the best way.

### I. WHAT IS AMISS ?

We are free, then, and bound to consider whether that “best way” is found in the *Congregational* system at present common to us and the Independents : a system resting on the principle, that each worshipping community is in itself complete and independent, and competent to all the functions of the Christian life. Without stopping to find what is true in the abstract principle, I cannot but see that in its particular working it receives very little confirmation. To speak of the *self-adequacy* of a village congregation, of miners, factory “hands,” and others of the wage-earning class, whose subscriptions, even if capped by a ten pound note from some employer, could provide neither building nor pastor, seems to me a poor mockery. Supposing the little conventicle raised, the members might, no doubt, meet for prayer and mutual exhortation ; or some one might emerge from among them, by grace of higher character, and lay down his tools to take spiritual supervision over his fellows. And I shall be the last to speak slightly of such spontaneous struggles into the true relations and simple forms of the Christian life ; among the most venerable men whom I can group together in my memory, there are no figures more truly apostolic than two or three that had passed from the workshop, or the loom, to the missionary’s circuit or the preacher’s desk. But the strong hold which may be gained by such a man on the affections and conscience of a simple people, is due to exceptional spiritual qualities, deeply felt by those in the same circle of life and experience ; yet, tied up with ways of thought and speech that divest his services of power to speak home to the different wants and more fastidious feeling of hearers not on the same intellectual level. His needy lot, his limited range of ideas, his social characteristics, are all against his

influence with any class beyond that of his own comrades. Under the most favourable circumstances, such a result ought not to content us. A village Sunday, which exhibits all the gentry streaming into one place of worship, and all the peasantry into another ; a plain chapel, where there are only labourers with their families on the benches, and one who might be their foreman in the pulpit, are unseemly products of a Christian civilisation, which professes to make of rich and poor, of gentle and simple, one Family of God, with equal need of mercy, equal ties of duty, and equal hopes of heaven. To prevent this irreligious separation of classes, several changes, no doubt, are needed. But one only do I here name as indispensable ; *in every place*, you must aim to plant a minister of religion, qualified for welcome access everywhere, with range of thought and sympathy over the whole gamut of social experience, and unembarrassed power, through enthusiasm of conviction, to communicate himself to others. For he is not to be the mere *deliverer of a message*, as he sometimes says of himself ; if he were, he might as well hold his peace ; though he may not know it, his soul itself is to be the educator of others, precipitating itself in its fulness upon their drier natures, and mellowing the seeds of good secreted there. It is not simply an intellectual, it is no less a *spiritual* mistake, to entrust the Gospel commission to men who know just enough to deliver it by rote. From such an organ, it has no penetrative power ; and all modern experience shows that the truest religious influence flows from minds of ample culture and refined feeling, and that the better they speak to the educated, the better do they speak to all. But, to place a minister thus furnished in a village, or a small borough, needs resources which cannot be contributed on the spot : voluntary congregationalism is completely unequal to the task. Yet, unless he can live and move, in his modest sphere, with some security against mean dependence and carking cares, how can he be expected to give himself to duties demanding, above all others, a spirit free alike from ambition and despondency ? See how effectually this problem, of country pastorates, is solved in churches not Congregational ; in the village parishes of England, where the Sabbath bell gathers worshippers of all conditions into the same sanctuary, without involving any harsh inadequacy in the services, the building, or the preacher, and an

accomplished and devoted minister, like a George Herbert or a Wilson, can move independently through cottages and halls, breathing the very spirit of a Christian life on all ; and in the Scottish Highlands, where the manse is the home of a pastor no less highly trained than the occupant of a city pulpit, and the family of the laird and the cottier meet in the same kirk.

To correct the weakness of our isolated congregational self-dependence, recourse has been had to a wider voluntaryism, that may transfer some of the opulence of great towns to stations perishing of want. A natural sympathy has led to the formation of Local Mission Societies, providing stated services and an itinerant pastoral supervision to the chapels of a large area; to the creation of an Augmentation Trust, for supplementing the scanty stipends of ministers ; and to the establishment of a Sustentation Fund, for similar grants to needy congregations. All these are well devised and valuable *palliatives*; but they are so, because the evil *is there*, and is expected to be *always there*. And they are quite inadequate, the collective grants not amounting to one-twelfth of the revenue required :\* they are attended by some insuperable disadvantages : the grants to ministers are not *earned*, as a *right* incident to service, but *begged*, as a *compassion* rendered to *need*: they are uncertain from year to year, dependent on the will of a committee, whose "Yes" or "No" cannot be challenged ; and not even the delicacy of administration which has hitherto prevailed can cancel the eleemosynary stamp thus woven in one piece into the system. One great benefit, if we will only accept it, these praiseworthy efforts at relief offer to us all; they *confess and testify the failure of our congregational independence*, by rallying a picked band of volunteers to advance in rescue from without.

## II. THE REMEDY.

The remedy for the *weakness of isolation* plainly lies in the *strength of combination*. What we need is simply a Voluntary Fund, contributed from the whole body of fellow-worshippers, and admini-

\* 1887 distribution :—

|                          |        |
|--------------------------|--------|
| Augmentation Trust ..... | £1,620 |
| Sustentation Fund .....  | 1,100  |
| Jones's Fund .....       | 303    |

stered on its behalf. I will call it *The Pastorate Fund*, in order to mark distinctly its destination. In suggesting it, I offer no speculative solution of our problem, but one which, under the name of "*Sustentation Fund*," has been tested by the experience of 44 years in the Free Kirk of Scotland. And no test could be more severe ; for the plan was not superinduced upon an historically organised society, but was practically called in at the birth of a new one. It was not a remoulding of existing materials, but a *creation out of nothing*; and it has become the financial mainstay of one of the most popular and effective churches in Christendom. It places in each Free Manse, whether in the great cities, or in the wilds of the Highlands and islands, a minister, of University education, with a secured stipend of £160. a year, irrespective of any supplement accruing from his own congregation. I say it is "*secured*" to him, because it depends on no variable will, but is paid to him as his rightful share of an equal dividend annually distributed from the fund to the whole body of ministers. Suppose the principle of this scheme to be adopted and conformed, in its application, to the conditions of our own case ; and trace its working throughout.

(i.) *How is the Fund created?*

Each single congregation, it is presumed, appoints its *Managing Committee*.

The Committee appoints, besides its Secretary and Treasurer, a *Deacon's Board*, from its own number, with any other members of the congregation.

The Deacon's Board, dividing the congregation among them, personally appeal to every adult attendant for a weekly subscription, to be collected monthly or quarterly.

Similar appeal shall be made, in due time, to new comers, and to young persons on their beginning to have earnings at disposal. The Deacons, having collected the subscriptions at the stated times, hand them in, with account, to the Treasurer, in one sum, quarterly.

This sum is not available for the current expenses of the Chapel, but is remitted intact to a General Treasurer at headquarters. The *Congregational Treasurer*, therefore, keeps and renders *two accounts*: one, for the central *General Treasurer*; the other for the *congregation*, of all

other receipts and expenditure, accounting for voluntary gifts, seat-rents, collections, revenues from endowments or grants *to the chapel*. The whole of these revenues are disposable, as now, at will, by the congregation.

It is evident that, in different congregations, the magnitude of the sum remitted to the *Pastorate* fund will be very various, with the number and rate of the subscriptions; and its ratio to the *congregational* income will shift, on either side of equality with it, to relative insignificance or large excess.

(ii.) *Possible Aggregate.*

I need hardly say that the figures of the following calculation cannot but be, in great measure, conjectural. To render them otherwise would require an acquaintance with the interior of the congregations represented, especially the smaller ones, to which I can make no pretension. In taking definite figures at all, I am influenced chiefly by the wish to supply some *exact conception* to serve as a *measure* of what might be expected from a Fund of the kind proposed. This being gained, the ratio is easily raised or lowered, with the shifting of our base. At the same time, I do not see any strong reason to doubt the possibility, judging from Scotch experience, of realising something like the results presented in the following computation.

After excluding societies having no settled minister, but only intermittent services, there remain about 220 congregations in Great Britain which might be expected to furnish contributors. The weekly rate of subscription will vary considerably, according to the earnings or fortunes of the contributors: but it is very desirable that the habit of setting aside some small saving for church purposes should be diffused as widely as possible, and be by no means confined to heads of families and independent adults.\* It should be a *condition of membership* of the church, and be regarded as due, where possible at all, at the usual age of *Confirmation*, or any equivalent sign of voluntary assumption of religious obligations. I so far rely on a general assent to this opinion and willingness to give it practical effect, as to count the probable

---

\* "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

subscribers to the Fund, with more reference to the number of full-grown *attendants* at public worship, than to the numbers on whom the expenses at present fall.

If we suppose an average rate of 6d. per week, we shall hardly be too sanguine, considering that, in Scotland, 4d. per week is a very usual rate for a Free Kirk working man in the country districts. How many shall we reckon on as the minimum list furnished by the smallest congregations? That will be, in great measure, settled by an indispensable rule, that the claim of a minister upon the Fund is conditional on the remittance from his people not falling below a certain standard. In Scotland, it is fixed at £60. per annum;—let us stoop to the weak, and set it at £50. There will, naturally, be an anxiety not to miss the prize by failing to come up to this mark; and, as 40 subscriptions at the 6d. average would reach it, we may reasonably take that number as the base of our reckoning for the 1st, or lowest, grade of our congregations. Ascending to the 2nd grade, we may hope for a list of 90 subscribers; to the third, of 150; to the 4th, and highest, of 210.

It may be worth while to see what, on these data, will be the *Annual Remittance* to the General Treasurer of each congregation of the several grades:—

|               |   |          |
|---------------|---|----------|
| Grade 1 ..... | 40 Subscriptions will =                     | £52 10 0 |
| ,, 2 .....    | 90      "      "      "      "      117 0 0 |          |
| ,, 3 .....    | 150     "      "      "      "      195 0 0 |          |
| ,, 4 .....    | 210     "      "      "      "      273 0 0 |          |

One factor more will make up the account. How many congregations of the 220, must be assigned to each of the *four* grades? In the absence of even approximate statistics, the distribution can make no pretension to accuracy. But, as far as an analysis not wholly conjectural warrants an estimate, I should say, we may place 50 congregations in the 1st, and lowest, grade; 70, in the second; 60, in the 3rd; and 40, in the 4th;—yielding the several *Totals*:—

|  |                 |             |
|--|-----------------|-------------|
| From the 50 of Grade 1 .....             | An Aggregate of | £2,625 0 0  |
| ,,    70    "    2 .....                 | "    "    "     | 8,190 0 0   |
| ,,    60    "    3 .....                 | "    "    "     | 11,800 0 0  |
| ,,    40    "    4 .....                 | "    "    "     | 10,920 0 0  |
| <i>i.e.</i> , An Annual Revenue of ..... |                 | £33,535 0 0 |

*(iii.) Principle of Distribution.*

The object of this Fund prescribes its mode of application. It aims to render possible the presence, in any district open to us, of a pastor, who may have ready access, as the organ of religious influence, to every stratum of society, and stand on a footing comparable with that of the working clergy around him. As, with us, he can be invested with no odour of sanctity from supernatural attributes of office, which put all priests upon a level, he depends, for his position among his fellow-men, entirely on his natural gifts and their full cultivation, on force and delicacy of character, on self-forgetful love, human and divine, and on the personal demeanour moulded by this inner life. Is this an impossible ideal? Or, if one who realised it had his lot cast among the quarry-men and waggoners of a village, do you think that his non-conformity or his heresies would suppress him, that the Squire would shut his hall-door against him, and the Rector pass him by on the other side? You cannot be of "so little faith." Place at such a post an Oberlin, a Tuckerman, a Travers Madge,—and do you think the highest churchman and the dullest squire will block his way, or even long resist him? Let us have our smallest stations served as well as the largest, and they will soon cease to be the smallest; for they stand, for the most part, in the midst of a simpler, sincerer, more susceptible people than the fastidious and used-up folk of the great towns. In this view, all your ministers must be *of the same class, and be regarded as engaged in an equal work.* All sorts of *individual differences* there will be, which will carry their consequences with them. These are God's ordinance. He distributes them at will, as He assigns beauty and plainness, strength and infirmity. *To us*, it is not permitted to aim at *less than the best*, or, in planting out guides to lead men on the heavenly way, to say: "Here, the pay is poor; so let the outfit be." Our duty takes the converse form, and bids us to say: "This service taxes and demands *a whole spiritual man*, and must be *provided at the cost of the whole temporal.*" Even in the secular professions, the equality of the same skill, invoked by the same needs, wherever felt, is freely recognised; and *one stipend* covers the Army-Surgeon's duty, whether he tends the wounds of rank and file, or of the Staff Officers at Head-quarters. On these grounds, it is incumbent on a church like

ours to look on all its ministers as occupying the same platform, and spending themselves in the same work ; and so to assign them equal shares in any collective revenue raised for their support. The distribution, therefore, of the total sum which the year places in the Treasurer's hands must be by *Equal Dividend*, on which each recipient has his admitted claim, contingent upon no administrator's will. The amount of that dividend will be £150 to each of the 220 ministers,—a surplus of £535 remaining over, disposable for other objects.

To frame Rules for the disposal of this surplus would take us too much into detail. There are many congregations enumerated in the published lists, where the minister, if there be one, would not come in for the equal Dividend; there are others, existing only *in clusters* and served only by a circulating Evangelist's visits, "few and far between;" and there is an ample missionary field, with points of local promise ready to respond to the first quickening appeal. All these both need succour and deserve it. But, on the whole, these remote and outlying wants are best estimated and provided for by neighbours familiar with the conditions and resources of each case, and should be left in the hands of provincial associations. Besides, the business of the Pastorate Fund is with and for the *regular army* of our spiritual warfare ; for this it is that the subscriptions are given ; and to hand over its surplus to the irregular troops of itinerant enlistment and missionary enterprise, would be to go beyond the bounds of the trust. At the same time, it is from this nomadic stage of religious movement that the durable forms of settled culture arise ; and the unlettered prophets whom God sometimes sends among His people, filled with Divine light and fire, are ever helping to create and discipline the organism which we can only maintain. They overrun and win new ground which our modes of culture could never reclaim. And the gains of these pioneers are indispensable ; for the Church has to widen its bounds, *and in fact lives by growth*. But though the *Missionary* agencies are in their nature different from the *Upholding*, they do but deal with two stages of the same story ; and there is a point of contact reached at which they that have *gathered* the flock deliver it over to those who *feed* it ; so that there is, or ought to be, a constant passing of young societies through adolescence to maturity. To help them over this transition is a legiti-

mate function of the surplus at disposal. There will always be a number of congregations that fall short of the minimum terms of the equal Dividend, though perhaps on the verge of them, and at all events doing their best and moving upwards. Justice demands that they should receive back the whole that they have given ; and a sympathy which is little more than justice will allow administrators a discretionary margin beyond, extending, perhaps, to two-thirds of the Dividend. Such nursing aid, if wisely given, might probably enable a few rising centres of life, year by year, to register their ministers on the equal list. It should be, however, distinctly understood, in every case of such unearned remittance, that it is to go entire to the minister, and is not applicable to other congregational uses.

### III. EFFECT OF THE PROPOSED SCHEME ON CONGREGATIONAL FINANCE.

All that has hitherto been said has reference to one of the two Accounts which, as we saw, the Treasurer of a congregation would have to keep, viz., that which would lie between him and the General Treasurer at head-quarters. We may suppose him now to have delivered this first Balance-sheet ; and may proceed to ask him for the other, viz., of the Receipts and Disbursements, for which he is responsible to the congregation.

In general, both the sources of revenue, and its appropriation, will be precisely what they are now, and no less than now dependent on the congregational will. But *one point* there is at which the new Fund touches the sources of income ; and *one also* at which it affects the disbursement. Each of these require a few words.

Seat-rents,—the usual source of revenue,—will be to some extent affected by the new Fund : for this reason. A regular subscription to the Pastorate Fund must be accepted as the act which constitutes *Church membership*, and as placing the subscriber on the roll of the religious body into whose exchequer that Fund is paid. And every Church member should be entitled to a sitting in any affiliated chapel of that body, whether near his own residence or elsewhere. Hence, it becomes necessary to make liberal provision, in every chapel, for Free Seats for members who wish to avail themselves of this right. This

must withdraw a portion of the area from appropriation ; but it by no means follows that the whole must be thrown open to miscellaneous publicity. If members attach value to the security of *reserved seats* for themselves and their families, where their books (often very sacred private gifts, with inscriptions not meant for every eye) may remain from Sunday to Sunday, and if they are willing to pay for it, their wish may be as reasonably granted in a chapel as a concert-room. And the revenue thus accruing as a *quid pro quo* for extra accommodation provided at a fixed rate, appears to me, so far as the minister shares in it, more respectful and considerate of his independence, than the proceeds of a voluntary subscription-list for his maintenance. There seems no reason to doubt that, under judicious management, the wishes, both of the free-sitters and of the seat renters, may be met without interfering with each other.

If our local Treasurer complains that we have thus stopped off a useful little rivulet from the influx to his congregational reservoir, he will be further aggrieved when we open a new channel of outflow, diverting a portion of the contents from his home-field. The congregation, having absolute disposal of all chapel receipts, unless from endowments for specialised objects, will naturally provide first for the proper care of the building, with its furniture, its music, &c. ; and next, for supplementing the minister's equal dividend, till the stipend reaches the limit which they approve. But the resources of large congregations in prosperous towns will not always be exhausted, when this has been adequately done ; and it will remain possible, and be deemed right, to send a supplementary grant, over and above the subscribers' remittance, to the Pastorate Fund ; and the minister himself will be disposed to say,—Give me no more, let the rest be dropped into my poorer brother's purse. When Dr. Candlish, at the Disruption in 1843, threw himself into the Free Kirk cause, he went at once from the charge of one of the largest and most prosperous of Edinburgh churches into the uncertain wilds of an unhoused and unorganised body of exiles. With marvellous rapidity their energetic leaders built up their new "City of God," while the popular enthusiasm was still at its height ; and Dr. Candlish, in an Edinburgh pulpit once more, gathered and held around him a greater and more influential

congregation than before. Its resources were exceptional, amounting, I have been told, to £5,000. a year, and depended, in a rare degree, on the minister's personal gifts. But he would never allow it to be said of him, that he was a gainer by the disruption ; he would accept the £1,000. a year he had received before ; and all beyond must be flung into the Sustentation Fund. Though there are not many of our ministers so placed as to have the opportunity of imitating this noble example, yet from a few of our congregations it is not unreasonable to expect some additions to the scanty surplus of the Pastorate Fund.

Having now spread before you, separately, the two balance-sheets, which every Congregational Treasurer will present, I will ask you to look at them together, and see how their ratio changes as you pass from one congregation to another, and what is the general effect of the interplay between them. A congregation which sends up to headquarters any sum above £50. and under £150., receives back in the person of the minister *more than it has given*. A congregation which sends an amount above £150., receives back *less than it has given* ; and this excess it is that compensates the other's deficiency. It needs no keenness of eye to detect the possibility of giving an unfair working to such a system : no mechanical checks can defy abuse, where the sense of honour has no control. If the members of a congregation, at present raising a stipend of £100. a year, were anxious to secure the services of a certain minister, who would not accept less than £200., one of them might suggest,—“Let us send up £50. in subscriptions to the Pastoral Fund ; it will be a cheap purchase of the first £150. of the salary required, and the £50. left on hand will make up the rest.” It is to be hoped that some clear-minded fellow-councillor would reply, “No, my brother ; till we have given to our needy Pastorate Exchequer as much as we take from it, we are not at liberty to affect liberality to our own minister ; the supplement to him must start from their equal dividend.” This abuse has actually arisen in the Free Kirk of Scotland, and is justly,—only too gently,—rejected as dishonourable by Dr. Walter Smith, in a speech before last year's General Assembly of his church.

If, in small societies, the prevalent temptation will be to get your own minister paid at others' cost, in the large societies it will be to

grudge the subsidy to others' ministers out of what might else go to your own. Both feelings are examples of the narrowing effect on our social morals of the congregational system,—the concentrated individualism of which greatly needs correction from a larger sweep of religious sympathy. Our proposals surely do not lay too heavy a tax upon that brotherly love natural among societies that are, in truth, but one community in many places. They are not revolutionary or confiscatory. They soften painful contrasts by assimilation and recognition of a common life. But they leave inequality enough to sustain a wholesale stimulus to energy, and answer to the ineffaceable diversity of personal character and gifts.

#### IV. RELATION OF PASTORATE FUND TO EXISTING TRUSTS.

To complete the financial part of our subject, it only remains for me to point out the bearing of the Pastorate Fund upon the operations of the two existing Trusts,—the Augmentation and the Sustentation Funds. Of these, the former does not appear at all in either of the Congregational Treasurer's accounts, its grants being strictly personal to the minister, involving no communication with the officers of the congregation : but the latter, sending its gifts, in answer to congregational application, necessarily has them acknowledged in the audited accounts. Whether, in the latter case, there is any definite engagement that the entire grant shall be handed over to the minister as an increment of his salary, I do not know, no such stipulation appearing in the questions addressed to the applicants. But any doubt or latitude upon this point would open the way, under the new Fund, to a possible abuse, against which precaution should be taken. If the subscriptions sent up from a small congregation to the Pastorate Fund were insufficient to earn the Equal Dividend for the minister, the congregation, on receiving a grant from the Sustentation Committee, would be strongly tempted to make up the deficiency out of it in the shape of nominally fresh and enlarged subscriptions, and to satisfy their conscience and their minister, by showing him what a good dodge it was to buy an annuity of £150. so cheap. In the case of the Augmentation Trust, the working will be different. Though its direct dealings are with the minister, it has been usual with its administrators

to make their grant more or less conditional on a concurrent increment to the stipend from the congregation. If that increment is made,—if, e.g., the members pledge themselves to £10. more,—the minister will, perhaps, receive £20. from Liverpool. Suppose, however, that this £10. supplements a previous stipend from voluntary sources of £40.,—making up the personal receipts to £70.,—will it not occur to the Treasurer that the congregational £50. could be turned to better account, if diverted from the individual minister to the Pastorate Exchequer? If he gets leave from the subscribers to transfer their names and amounts to *that account*, their minister will be placed on the Equal Dividend list, and his income will be more than doubled; and, even if the Liverpool grant drops off, will be thrice its old amount!

In this latter case, there seems nothing illegitimate in the process which has been traced. There is no misapplication of money that is not at free disposal; it consists of *bonâ fide* voluntary subscriptions which the donors may assign to whatever object they prefer; their transference of them from one account to another is no secret to the Augmentation Trustees, who have only been the occasion of their enlargement; and are in no way bound to continue their grant, if they deem it no longer needed. They have waked up a languid society to lift itself on to the Equal Platform; and may either help it further, or leave it there.

In the former case, should it occur, there would be a direct misappropriation of money from one benevolent fund to establish a larger claim upon another, through the medium of a deceptive list of personal subscribers; and the procedure would have to be guarded against, like any other fraudulent device.

Even in their legitimate working, the tendency of both these Trusts, so far as they operate in the field below the minimum, must be, in virtue of their very success, to lay a heavy burden on the Pastorate Fund, by fetching up, on to the Equal Platform, a series of struggling congregations that must long draw a revenue vastly in excess of their contributions. I believe that these agencies would work in a more fruitful field if they addressed themselves chiefly to the stations of the regular spiritual army *above the minimum*; and supplemented the

resources of those stations by additional powers and the awakening of fresh hope and energy.—Here I take leave of finance arrangements, and turn to the system of personal and religious relations to which they properly belong ; endeavouring, next, to define the

#### V. CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION, AS MINISTER, ON THE EQUAL DIVIDEND LIST.

Determining them first from the negative side, I observe

(i.) They must be something more than the bare fact of election to the pulpit of an affiliated congregation ; though this freedom of election must be scrupulously preserved. You would never think of *creating a right* to an income of £150. a year, and throwing it open to any one who, in ministerial guise, can gain the ear of a simple and trustful people for two or three Sundays, and get carried by their votes into their vacant pulpit. No experienced observer can be blind to the ruinous mistakes already liable to be made for want of some better protection of our congregations from such misleading or insecure impressions ; and few of our veteran ecclesiastic gossips are without stories of death-dealing preachers who, like the barbarian heroes that counted their victories by the skulls festooning their walls, had no record of their triumphs but the congregations they had slain. The absence among us of any systematic tests of faith render all the more essential the less obtrusive proofs of intellectual and spiritual fitness for the Christian ministry. We suffer, indeed, I sometimes think, from a certain *conceit of freedom*, and are apt to be prepossessed in favour of any man who has thrown off his orthodoxy, and to receive him with open arms ; so that our community comes to be regarded simply as an asylum for such as divest themselves of their old faith, whether or not they have replaced it by any other. If the need of a fitter sifting process is already felt, it will become far more imperative, if a distinct right should be set up to *a definite social status, secure of a fixed income*.

To an audience like this, I need not insist that a religion at once spiritual and historical, requires in its minister special gifts of character and of attainment, that mark out its administration as *a distinct function*, no less than that of the physician or the lawyer. With quite as much of *special knowledge* as they require, he needs

much more both of aptitude and of culture that is *Catholic*. He has to speak, like the barrister, in every mode of reasoning, of persuasion, of moral appeal, and to know, if less of the history and contents of law, at least as much of its ultimate roots and eternal sources. He has a diagnosis to exercise as delicate as the physician's, maladies as various to interpret and define, and wounds more terrible to assuage or heal. In short, he also has to practise a skilled profession, which only a duly attempered mind and heart can rightly wield ; and the reasons for protecting the inexperienced against incompetent practitioners in it are as little disputable as the need of guarding the public health against quacks and bone-setters. This is done, and can only be done, by deliberately training, testing, and certifying, a duly qualified *class* ; from which, then, *individual selection* may be made at will for each particular want. As, on crossing the threshold of his calling, the physician obtains his diploma, and the advocate is "called to the bar," so, in all well-ordered churches, does the intending minister receive his "license" or "ordination," as an expression of certified accomplishment for his work.

(ii.) The *Educational* conditions of certified qualification have been already satisfactorily shaped by long and ever-enlarging experience ; and have merely to be maintained, and kept open to modification, in conformity with our Collegiate rules. They include, as you know, two stages,—the *Undergraduate*, certified as complete, by attainment of the Degree in Arts, at some University of the United Kingdom ; and the *Theological*, certified as complete, by the signature of the Philosophical and Theological Faculty.

But for the work of the Christian ministry there are *personal* qualities needed which have no scope in the class-room, and may, or may not, co-exist with the accumulation of learning and the sharpening of thought. And it has usually been deemed best to refer these personal and particular attributes, of both the outward and the inward man,—of speech and address, of ruling enthusiasm, of sympathetic and pious impulse,—to other estimate than that of the academic teachers ; and though from our present staff I should accept both orders of testimony with entire and equal confidence, yet it has not always been so ; and is so often otherwise as, manifestly, to justify the usage of other churches.

1. At the close of the first of his two stages of preparation, the candidate shall present himself, rather for friendly welcome and recognition than for direct examination, before a *District Board* of neighbouring ministers and laymen,—*e.g.*, a section of the Lancashire Provincial,—who should assure themselves of his graduation, and, on the testimony of his pastor, of his serious self-dedication to the ministry, and shall hear him read some short Exercise prescribed to him; and shall judge, by free conversation with him on his past ways and his future aspirations, of his probable aptitude for the life and work of the ministry. If satisfied, they commend him, as approved, to the theological course.

Besides this introduction to his own neighbourhood as its future foster-son, he would undergo, as at present, the Professors' examination preliminary to the student's entrance on the theological course,—intended especially to secure the apparatus of ordinary Biblical, geographical, historical knowledge,—required for understanding the theological lectures.

2. At the close of the second and final stage of preparation, the student, now mature, brings the certificate of its completion before the same *District Board* of neighbouring ministers and laymen, and seeks from them a crowning recognition as a fully-qualified minister. At this meeting, he will read a sermon; and if, after conversation with him, the Board adheres to its approval, the certificate of full qualification shall be presented to him;—and the meeting close with a service of welcome into the ministry.

The Board's Clerk shall keep, with the Minutes of its Proceedings, a Register of all Certificates issued, as material for an authoritative list of the regular ministry.

(iii.) The conditions of admission into this class from the *outside world* ought to be tantamount to the foregoing; though, in the case of seceders from other churches, conceding some relaxation due to the different ecclesiastical usages. The applicant should address himself to the nearest District Board; to which he should furnish evidence, from his previous communion, of character, attainments, and aptitudes, equivalent to the requirements for registration under the former head, and which, by personal communication, should satisfy itself of his

thorough acquaintance with the religious basis, the Christian aims, and the catholic principle and method of the church which he proposes to join.

If these conditions are satisfactorily fulfilled, a short service of welcome, and union by the right hand of fellowship, shall follow, not as an act of re-ordination, but as an attestation of fraternal reception; which shall be finally recorded by certificate and registration.

Thus is obtained a definite body, in the members of which the claim upon the treasury vests.

## VI. CONSTITUTION AND FUNCTION OF DISTRICT BOARD.

But what is this *District Board* which, one by one, determines the entries in the Register? If it is to be the certifier of the admitted pastors, how is it to be constituted? and what is to be the range of its functions?

### (i.) *How it is made up.*

It is, essentially, a *District Committee*, drawn from an area containing (let us say) not more than twenty congregations; and composed of the minister and, on an average, two laymen for each,—60 in all; together with the Principal of any allied Theological College within the district. At the first meeting in the year, a President for the year to be appointed; and whenever required, a permanent salaried clerk, to keep the minutes, to issue notices and certificates as ordered, and aid in the correspondence and preparation of agenda.

### (ii.) *What it has to do.*

To obtain annually, from each minister, a Report, delivered to the clerk, of—

(1.) The number of Church members in his congregation; of usual communicants; of other attendants; of Sunday Scholars and Teachers; of attendants in congregational classes.

(2.) Any increase or decrease in the chapel estate, or alteration in its Trustees; with other particulars in the history of his charge. And then—

(3.) These Reports to be tabulated by the clerk. Thus wants, declensions, new openings, are made known.

In case of any congregational dissension referred to them by minister

or people, the District Committee shall investigate the matter; subject to appeal to an ulterior decision. This function, involving the power of cancelling (or, under appeal, suspending) the certificate of admission to the Roll, is the necessary counterpart to the power of certifying admission.

Besides its stated annual meeting, the District Committee to be convened, as required, by order of the President, *proprio motu*, or on the requisition of ten members.—Do you think all this too new? I will beg you to consider the

#### VII. RELATION OF THIS BODY TO OUR EXISTING AND PAST AGENCIES.

(i.) Existing.—Look round you over the land, and does nothing from among the historic memorials of England, arrest your eye which much resembles it? In the Provincial Assembly of Lancashire and Cheshire, in the West of England Association of Presbyterian Divines, in the Warwickshire and Neighbouring Counties' Association of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, the skeleton of this very organism exists, only imperfectly clothed with the instruments and functions of a living body. With some, indeed, of the things mentioned they do concern themselves, and, if I mistake not, they feel a capacity and a thirst for more substantive activity, working off their restlessness by papers and discussions which vent an interest, but lead to nothing. They betray plainly enough, that the framework is ready for larger agency, as soon as we choose to fill it in with a bolder trust of responsible powers. This is no wonder; for, again, look at the

(ii.) Past.—The fraternities are but the crippled survivals of bodies that *once actually did all the things* which I have mentioned. In the time of the Commonwealth, as still remaining records show, they were *Presbyteries*, not yet afraid to uphold a decent order in their religious life; and our District Committee, as described above, is nothing but a *liberalised Presbytery*,—*liberalised* by its large *lay preponderance*, and by its having no “*Confession of Faith*” to enforce and guard, while retaining the function of maintaining the single congregations in sympathetic union, and balancing their centrifugal caprices by the enthusiasm of a religious brotherhood. It was only natural that, when the living thing was gone, the name “*Presbyterian*” should also die

away from us. It is no less natural that, with the thing, the name too should return. Let then our *District Committee* claim it, as it rises from the dead, and fill it with the glory of a higher life. Tell me not that this would be a *reaction*; if you have imbued your mind with the history of English Nonconformity, you will recognise in this move a resumption, after a long enforced aberration, of the true line of our development. Let me but remind you how the facts stand.

The adherents of Richard Baxter, whose children we are, and in whose *Meeting-houses* we still pray, never renounced their Presbyterian church order. They clung to it through the Commonwealth; they hoped for it at the Restoration; it was no less their symbol of religious liberty than was Parliamentary legislation of civil liberty; and both were covered by their patriotic vows. In devotion to it, in 1662, they refused to bend to Royal falsehood and hierarchical assumption: they became outcasts on St. Bartholomew's Day; their ejected ministers were silenced and outlawed; their worship was prohibited; their schools were closed; — their whole system was broken up! What common religious life their families had, by twos and threes, was clandestine and scattered. And even when, with the gradual relaxation of police vigilance, private persons could gather, in holes and corners, for stated worship, it was but in detached instances; and without the possibility of combined action. Not till 1689 did the Toleration Act give them a restricted legal existence; so that, for 27 years, their whole order of church life lay in ruins. During that time, the directors of it had passed away; a new generation had grown up unfamiliar with its habits; and the materials for its reconstruction had crumbled in decay. All that the remnant could do was to raise and sustain a “*Meeting-house*” here and there, and concentrate attention on its separate affairs, so as to train each “little flock” to hold its own ground. What does this story mean? It means that they were *forced* into the congregational *modus vivendi* by the utter destruction of their favourite *Presbyterian organisation*. Accordingly, they were no better loved than before by their fellow-sufferers, the Independents, with whom Congregationalism was a fundamental principle. It is, therefore, the indisputable *fact*, that we inherit our detached congregational condition as a *privation and disability*, and not

as a trust,—as a stamp of bondage, not as a gain of honourable choice. We ought, surely, under these conditions, to ask ourselves seriously,—Whether our *accidental Necessity* is really as good as our forefathers' *deliberate Preference*?

### VIII. WHY THEIR PREFERENCE WAS JUSTIFIED.

The orderly management of human social affairs is really susceptible of only three main forms, which turn up alike in the civil and in the ecclesiastical province ; and the working of each one of them in the State will sometimes exhibit its character with less disguise than when we look at it only in the Church.

(i.) The elementary form is that of a *village community*, a simple group of homogeneous families, living under equal conditions, by rules of their own framing, under elders of their own choice. Such a community might be completely self-sufficing, if it existed as an oasis in the desert ; its disputes adjusted by the elders ; its laws and imposts and elections determined by the general vote. The inadequacy of this provision reveals itself when other communities multiply around, out of relation with which, sympathetic or competitive, complexities arise which the separate autonomies cannot resolve. In short, the co-existence of equals is the negation of government. This is the fatal flaw in the French doctrine of the *Commune*; as it was in the ancient rule by *single Cities*, each controlled by the primary assembly of its own citizens, while yet ambitious to be a territorial State. Precisely this is the congregational system in the Church. True, each Christian communion in a Proseucha is *complete in itself*, so long as there is no other ; just as a family of three is complete, till there are four, five, six. But each addition brings new duties, new affections, new subordination ; and the pride of independence and the right of indifference, in the separate units, are thenceforward out of place and constitute a denial of obligation. Not even the bonds of Christian sympathy suffice to prevent the feuds and divergencies among a number of co-equal but detached societies ; just as the common Hellenism of the Greeks could not prevent constant wars, or give them a common history and civilisation. That a swarm of primary assemblies should long continue to have the same preponderant wishes, and decree the same things, is as little possible, as for a

fleet of sailing ships, in the midst of ever-veering winds and through a dark night, to be found together in the morning.

(ii.) In *monarchical* government (often induced by reaction from the former) we have the opposite extreme, never quite divorced from the conception of Divine right, vested in a human person. Its ecclesiastical application is seen in the *Hierarchy* of the Episcopal system, the grades of which are occupied by officers under appointment from a heavenly King, to whom alone they are responsible ; and *whose Will*, and not *that of the governed*, is their rule. On this fiction I will only remark, how curious an illustration we have here of the *early political ripeness* and *slow spiritual maturity* of the English genius ; in its bold rejection, under the Stuarts, of Divine right in the State, and its childish retention of it in the Church. Were Episcopacy rid of this pretension, a fair case might be made for it, on the ground that gradations of official authority were favourable to a just order. But, resting as it does with one foot on a hollow superstition, and the other on popular forbearance, it totters to its fall.

(iii.) The Swiss system of the "Reformed" Church concedes legislative functions neither to the primary congregational assemblies, one by one, nor to the Prelacy, as a sacred order ; but, assuming the fraternal equality of duly enrolled ministers, and the competency of the Christian laity to judge of ecclesiastical affairs, vests the administration of all collective concerns in *Representative Bodies*, elected by the separate societies, from their own members, clerical and lay. Securing itself against both municipal humours and hierarchical dictation, it appropriates the great modern instrument of combined order and development for a free people ; and, accordingly, has played part in the struggles and accompanied the wanderings of free peoples all over the world : Huguenots, Flemings, Dutch, Swiss, Scotch,—all have carried with them to new continents and islands, a church-order of which they have never repented. In Scotland there have been plenty of schisms, by which successive swarms have been severed from the Established Church ; but every one of them has carried off with it the old church-order ; it has never been *with that* the quarrel has arisen. And in Switzerland and Holland it has flexibility enough to persist through theological changes quite as great as have been needed here.

I deplore, then, the arrest, by the *Caroline* persecution, of the natural course and power of development, and the enforced substitution of the isolated congregational system which had repelled us from Independency. I recognise, in the obvious desire for union, a healthy revival of the best spirit and true discernment of our forefathers. And if union is to be effected, I believe that neither experience nor invention can commend to us a form more effective, more popular, and more in harmony with the genius of our civic life, than that of which *they* and *we* have been bereft.

#### IX. WHAT BESIDES THE PRESBYTERY ?

In the District Committee, or, as I shall now call it, *the Presbytery*, you have a sample, in little, of the whole organisation. But its local limits imply that there is more behind ; of this you will require me to give account. Where congregations are numerous, and scattered over large geographical areas, it is usual to form *Provincial Synods*, by gathering together representatives from two or three contiguous presbyteries, and to entrust them with the power of determining, on appeal, matters not satisfactorily settled in any one of the component presbyteries. But a religious body of no greater scope than ours may well dispense with such intermediary arbitration, and leave it to its final *General Assembly* to ratify or disallow the challenged acts of any local council. I reckon that ten or twelve presbyteries would suffice for all our needs in Great Britain ;\* and they may well stand in direct relation with the central House of Representatives. We turn then to the

##### (i.) *Constitution of the General Assembly.*

1. It shall be composed of five ministers and ten laymen, elected by each presbytery, together with the President and Professors of Theological Colleges. The names of the elected members are to be sent in by the Presbytery Clerk a month before the time.
2. It shall meet annually, for four or more days, at the place and time determined at the previous meeting. And a *Special* meeting may be held, if convened by the Standing Committee, hereafter mentioned.
3. It shall be known as the English Presbyterian General Assembly.

---

\* Our "*kindred congregations*" in Ireland already have their Presbyterian organisation complete.

*(ii.) Business of the General Assembly.*

1. Written reports shall be presented from each presbytery, and referred for analysis to the "Committee of Reports," which shall correct the statistics from them up to date.

2. Committees shall be appointed, for consideration of (a) Grievances still open in the reports. (b) Proposals of new action and changed rules. (c) Education in connection with the Church, including Sunday schools, libraries, congregational classes. (d) Missions and moral reforms. (e) Public worship and its subsidiary appliances.

These five Committees to bring up their reports on the third day, with their recommendations, and a resolution, referring to the "Standing Committee" whatever needs longer deliberation.

3. Notice must be given, a month before the meeting, through the Clerk, of any motion by a private member; and in the convening circular to the elected members, the terms of these notices shall be given. The motions thus announced shall come under discussion on the second day.

4. The administrators of the Pastorate Fund, viz., a Treasurer, with six coadjutors, and also a Standing Committee of twenty-five members, for the conduct of indispensable interim business, shall be elected on the fourth day.

5. The administrators of the Pastorate Fund, without trenching on the independent responsibility of the Trustees of existing funds of similar intent, may seek co-operation with them, and act upon any approved combined method; especially, as to the distribution of such *surplus* as may remain after payment of the equal dividend. With this view, it would be desirable that on the administrative Board of the Fund there should be a representative of each of the principal Trusts.

6. Prior to the opening of the Assembly, Divine Service shall be held in some convenient place of worship. On first opening the Assembly (last year's President being in the chair), the President (or *Moderator*) shall be chosen from the roll of members. And, in case of vacancy, appointment shall then be made of a permanent *Chief Clerk*.

So might we construct, as I believe, a true working parliament, which would find our weaknesses and develop our strength, and secure for us precisely that pervading evenness of order which is the condition

of healthy growth and life. Whether the numbers supposed,—150,—are too great or too small for effective deliberation, may be open, like other details, to reasonable question. In defining them for the moment, I mean no more than to give distinctness to the picture.

#### X. TO FIND AND DENOMINATE THE CHARACTERISTIC OF THE CHURCH THUS CONSTITUTED.

(i.) *Characteristic.*—In all that has been said, I have not hesitated to assume that I was addressing persons, or the representatives of persons, capable and desirous of uniting themselves into a *living church*, and conscious to themselves of the inward sympathies of piety, duty, and affection, which render such union natural. I have spoken throughout of “*our*” congregations; have said that “*we*” do this, or avoid that; have treated “*our*” members as a determinate class. And this language implies two things: that we stand in presence of some *other communion or communions* whose shelter *does not cover us*; and that, among our own internal attributes, it is one and the same feature in us all which differences our communion from theirs. *Who*, then, and *what*, are *We*, and what are *They*, that there must be separate roofs to cover us? As they, too, are within the fold of Christ, how is it that we are parted from them?—and, *in parting from them*, find ourselves not scattered far and wide, but thrown all together, and conferring here? Can we seize the *one distinctive characteristic* which justifies our common severance, and explains our mutual attraction? As the severance is old, having entered now on its third century, that characteristic cannot be new, but must be the continued ring and throb in us of some thought or love that has stirred the heart of seven generations. What common feeling, then, impels us to *unify ourselves*, not only with each other to-day, but with the Founders of our history: the Heywoods, the Calamys, the Howes, the Oldfields, the Henrys, the Fairfaxses, the Taylors, the Worthingtons, of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? To look at the circular convening us to this meeting, we might well despair of striking any unison from the chords of so many instruments,—Unitarian, Liberal Christian, Free Christian, Presbyterian, Non-subscribing (and *nondescript*) and kindred congregations. Entering this hall, therefore, under *six banners*, can we hope to

march out under *one*? When I take my eye off these patterned symbols which we hang aloft, and look at the bands that advance beneath them, and see the blending enthusiasm that stirs them all, that hope grows strong in me. We preach, I am sure, not *six Gospels*, but *one*; we press "towards the mark" of no conflicting ends, but seek the shelter of the same Divine communion and human brotherhood. If we do but fling away the masks which disguise our unity, our life will escape from enfeebling fictions into sincere and firm reality.

The amusing miscellany of names under which we are gathered, bears witness that we have passed, without breach of continuity, through changes which anywhere else would have led to schisms, but which do but bring us along several paths into conference to-day. Whence is this? We owe it to the ground taken by our spiritual ancestors in defining their nonconformity. They disclaimed all idea of setting up a new church on any basis of their own: *they* also, not less than others, held that the Church of Christ was divine, and could be *only one*. "True," they said, "its unity must not be broken; God preserve us from that sin! But there are *two ways* of guarding its continuity and self-identity: (1) by *prohibiting all development of thought on sacred things* within it, and setting up *an absolute Orthodoxy*, stereotyped in its terms; (2) by *treating such development as the native blossoming of its very life and essence*, and therefore providing for it, without prejudice to the disciple's fealty to Christ, and filial union in him with God. In resorting to the former, you lay on us a burden which is no part of the yoke of Christ, and which we cannot take without turning our fellowship with him into slavery to you. We take the latter way, and following the openings of the Spirit, go whither, as we believe, we are divinely led." This is the momentous alternative committed to our charge. To take the one side of it is to set up the church as some stone obelisk, cut all over with the hieroglyphics of the Creeds. Taking the other, we plant it as a forest tree, with never-dying sap, or let us rather say, we tend it as a graft on the stock of the "Living Vine," of which we all are branches. The distinction is *unique* in its magnitude. No particular varieties of rite or doctrine emerging from development can be in such absolute contrast, as the two propositions, "All differentiating development is the road to ruin," and "All the Christian theologies may be found on the paths of salvation."

This utter breach of the whole conception of an *essential Orthodoxy*,—this refusal to treat the divergences of human thought as a forfeiture of Divine Love and Christian communion, I hold to be the noblest characteristic of our forerunners, and our most sacred heir-loom. In virtue of it, they held it inadmissible, in founding a place of worship, to introduce into the terms of membership any conditions but such as are owned by every disciple of Christ. Were they to append any stipulation in favour of this or that solution of open questions, either guarding the Communion-table by *tests*, or adopting a doctrinal or party *name*, they would be repelling some instead of inviting all, and, in thus recruiting for themselves instead of for Christ, would be guilty of sheep-stealing from the Good Shepherd. They were bound, *in their collective capacity as fellow-worshippers*, to be (as they said), “*mere Christians*,” though, if you asked them, *one by one*, what they thought on the disputed questions of their day, few would be more ready, more direct, and more considerate in their replies. Their favourite formula indeed, “*The sufficiency of scripture*, and the right and duty of *private judgment*,” has in it an exactitude of meaning which is seldom appreciated. The first phrase says, “If a man draws from his Bible what most elevates his mind and sanctifies his heart, he is in communion with Christ and God.” The second phrase, in reserving all disputable matters for “*private judgment*,” means to withdraw them from *all public verdict whatsoever* within the church; not that of councils and popes alone, or of kings, parliaments, and synods; but, no less, of *each single congregation*, as a public *organisation of private persons*. The “*judgment*” is to belong sacredly to *each individual*, one by one, and is *on no account to be bespoken for him, by vote or implication, as an incident of his seeking your Christian fellowship*.

*So far as we have been true to this* faith of our fathers, we have left it to others to found their communions on metaphysical theologies, Christologies, soteriologies, eschatologies; assured that He who once cleansed a desecrated house of prayer, will whip out these intruders from his diviner temple, to spend their voices in the schools; and resolute to dedicate our sanctuary to His own pure Religion, as realising and revealing the perfect relation between the human Soul and God.

True to this rule, *unswervingly and down to the present day*, I fear we

have not been. I hardly need touch, however slightly, on the stages of the history. When first a Christian fellowship was formed, with latitude for doctrinal development, the effect soon was that the prevalent Presbyterian theology gradually lost its Calvinistic hue; which, fading at various rates from individual minds, left at last no perceptible trace. But it was a *silent change*, like the emergence into a new season; and no one ever thought of treating it as a wheel-about of the Church front, or of taking on the name *Arminian*. Next, the Athanasian conception of the Son of God paled and shrunk away, and he became subordinate; but no one could say *when* the turn was taken; nor was it marked by assuming the name *Arian*. Yet, through both these stages, there is no difficulty in determining the *individuals* who appropriated these modifications of the old doctrines; it is simply through their *open profession and vindication* of the newer thought that we know what was passing through the minds of their contemporaries and fellow-worshippers. But the *personal variations* were not allowed to touch the *catholic basis* of their religious associations; if any one ever spoke of the *Congregations* as *Arminian* or *Arian* bodies, he was known at once to be an *enemy*, who intended to treat them with opprobrium. And this is the true principle. If any one, being a Unitarian, shrinks, on fitting occasion, from plainly calling himself so, he is a sneak and a coward. If, being of our catholic communion, he calls his chapel or its congregation Unitarian, he is a traitor to his spiritual ancestry, and a deserter to the camp of its persecutors. Last of all, came the surrender of the pre-existence of Jesus and the acceptance of him simply as "a Man approved of God by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by him;"—a change far less than the preceding one, and more easily passed in silence; as indeed it often *was*, and certainly would have been, had it occurred under protection of the Baxterian principle of catholicity in its full strength. But it is a remarkable fact that this particular modification of opinion passed mainly into other hands: Biddle, Firmin, Locke, Lardner, Priestley, Lindsey, Belsham, *were all of them trained in communions of dogmatic basis*, and taught to classify churches by their creeds and confessions of faith. And the old volumes of "Unitarian Tracts" show that already there existed in London, quite unrelated to the Presbyterian

development, places of worship expressly appropriated to the inculcation of Unitarian theology. Add to this the perpetual influx into our religious societies, ever since, of seceders from orthodox churches, who bring with them only *corrected opinions* without mere catholic habits of thought, and it becomes intelligible how the older and larger principle came to be lost sight of and overpowered, and foreign influences availed to introduce at last the inconsistent practice of attaching doctrinal names to societies which had hitherto rigorously avoided them. The date of the change is pretty clearly marked in contemporary letters, especially of Priestley. In June, 1787, Lindsey was anxious to get a certain Mr. Dinwhiddie ordained *expressly as a Unitarian minister*, and consulted Priestley as to whether so new a proposal could be carried into effect in Birmingham.\* On the 17th of that month, Priestley replies that "it clearly cannot be done in Birmingham," and recommends that it should be at "Essex Street, as the mother church of Unitarianism, which (he hopes) will have many daughters."† And, again, speaking of Dr. Barnes (as tutor in the academy), he says: "He cannot conceal his jealousy of *Mr. Hawkes's Unitarian Chapel*" (Oct. 12, 1789.) His want of sympathy with the old catholic sentiment is strongly marked by his avowal: "In the present state of Christianity, I am for increasing the number of sects rather than diminishing them; but I am only one individual" (Feb. 26, 1770.)‡ With this curious expression of the *separatist* spirit, it is instructive to contrast the *Presbyterian catholicity* on which Dr. John Taylor threw the strongest emphasis. In his "*Defence of the Common Rights of Christians*,"§ he says: "So long as the Dissenters, on principle, refuse all party schemes and stand upon the single basis of universal Christianity, and, upon this bottom, and no other, have true affection to one another, and to all men,"—"their cause, set upon its proper basis, will stand; nor shall the gates of hell prevail against it. But, if ever they abandon liberty and love, and stiffly adhere to party names and schemes," "they will become weak, and waste, and dwindle into nothing" (1737.) And in the dedication of his "*Paraphrase to the Letter to the Romans*," addressed to his congregation, at Norwich, in 1745: "Give your catholicism its proper worth by improving in sound knowledge, and guard it with

---

\* Life I., p. 410.    † Life II., p. 35.    ‡ Life I., p. 114.    § p. 19.

resolution ; reject all slavish, narrow principles with disdain ; neither list yourselves nor be prest into the service of any sect or party whatsoever. Be *only Christians*, and follow only God and Truth."

The supposition that this attitude of mind, in providing for development, induces "indifference to truth," or cowardice in its profession, is refuted by the simple fact, that the whole transition from the Puritan Calvinism to the theology of Wellbeloved and James Drummond, has worked itself out on the historical line of our spiritual descent from the days of Baxter to this generation ; and that, on the shelves of our libraries, stand silent witnesses from our own household of faith to every step on that long road. A parallel movement was, no doubt, simultaneously made by the Latitudinarians of the Established Church and the disciples of Locke ; but, in the commingling of the two literatures, the influence was unquestionably reciprocal. Indeed, it would be strange if a religious body which expressly reserved for itself scope for movement, should be found more disposed to stand still than one which took up a fixed and absolute position.

For these reasons, I avow my deliberate adhesion to both the catholic principle of union, and the ecclesiastical organism of administration, which was approved and vindicated by our branch of English non-conformity.

(ii.) *Name.* One final inference I must not shrink from drawing. Are we to quit our isolation and grow together into *one Church*? Then we cannot remain *anonymous*, or *polyonomous*; and we shall naturally wish to have ourselves the choice of a term marking what we mean to be. If it is to unify us with each other, and with our historical Past, it must signify *what we are and ever have been*, and exclude *what we have refused to be*. We have always been *a fellowship devoted to the worship of God, and the service of man in the spirit and faith of Jesus Christ*. We have always refused to be *circumscribers of that fellowship by internal standards of belief*. How can we compendiously intimate these two things? Can we find what we want, without going further afield, among the *six heads* of our invitation hither? Let us see what exactly each of them says :—

(1.) *Unitarian* denotes a *doctrinal* distinction, warning the *Trinitarian* that the communion is not for him.

(2.) *Presbyterian* denotes an ecclesiastical distinction, warning the *Independent* that the communion, should he join it, will not be found standing in lonely autonomy, but in relation with others; and warning the *Episcopalian* that the communion is *federally*, and not *hierarchically* ordered. This difference, unlike the previous one, lies not among the members of a particular congregation *inter se*, but only among the several congregations as parts of a whole; it is, therefore, not *personal*, but *constitutional* only; *political* rather than *religious*.

(3.) The remaining terms (except "*kindred*," which only refers back to whatever you like in the others) all aim at marking the same feature, *viz.*, *absence of doctrinal tests*. They lay the finger, therefore, *on the real distinction*; with the disadvantage, however, of touching it *only on the negative side*; and of doing so by words implying reproach to others as *not "free,"* and as *"illiberal."*

Does any of these meanings, then, fulfil the conditions?

1. The first (Unitarian) is at variance with the catholic prohibition of doctrinal bars to communion. It is also at variance with the reservation of disputed questions for "*private*," *i.e.*, *personal* judgment, by setting up a *collective* or *corporate theology*. Even when taken as correctly describing the theology of all the individuals worshipping in our chapels for the last two or three generations, its application, even to private persons, rapidly thins away behind that date; and, as a designation of the people for whom were raised the very meeting houses still occupied by us, would have been repudiated as a betrayal of their fundamental principle. The word, in short, differences *two times* in the development of open opinion within the history of *one church*; and does not difference the permanent essence of that church from that of others.

2. These disqualifications cannot be charged upon the phrases "*Free*," "*Liberal*," "*Non-subscribing*," "*Christians*." They correctly intimate the nature of *our separation from others*; but not of *our union among ourselves*; for people who never meet for worship and for joint nurture of the Christian life, may also be "*free*" from tests, and may pass no illiberal judgments on others;—things which may also be said of an "*Ethical Society*."

3. The name *Presbyterian* is also silent, in *explicit words*, about

public worship and Christian life. But implicitly it assumes them ; the term having no meaning but as denoting a particular grouping and interdependence of worshipping Christian congregations and their mode of operating on society. It thus includes the acts of spiritual devotion and fellowship. It denotes the true type of constitutional church order. But it does not express the fundamental difference that shuts other churches against us, *viz.*, that, acknowledging no standard of orthodoxy, we make provision for development of thought on things divine, while they, assuming an absolute station, making provision against it. So far, indeed, is the word, from close association with this idea, that it has no more familiar companion than the severest of Creeds,—the “Westminster Confession of Faith,”—and a Scotchman would rub his eyes if ever he came upon them separate. But, happily, our historical experience as South British Nonconformists has remedied this deficiency, and put a new meaning into the word. Buffeted for their scruples by the Prelatists, and for their latitude by the Independents, our fathers, while still Presbyterian, cast themselves free of *all dictation*, and retreated for shelter to the *word of Prophets and the Mind of Christ*; openly proclaiming that *that* was their sanctuary, which they would not quit for any “temple made with hands.” This became, and still remains, their known badge and peculiarity ; it has been recognised as such in the courts, and in the legislature ; it is the entitling ground on which we still hold many a substantial old chapel, like Cross Street, Manchester, and the Great Meeting, Leicester. By prefixing then the epithet *English* to the word *Presbyterian*, we secure the *catholic conception*, as our distinction from others, and add it on to the conditions of spiritual fellowship and of church order which unite us with each other.

There is always an advantage in a name taken from an *outside usage*, rather than from an *invisible thought*. And when once we have actually become Presbyterians again, no one can challenge our right to the name ; the disaffection at our anonymous condition dies of itself ; the broken links of our history are refastened ; and in matters of doctrinal opinion, individual freedom will be both quieter and more complete when corporate responsibility for them is avowedly at an end.

In hoping thus to solve the problem of our collective religious life,

I am perhaps touched by some filial affection for the Church which ordained me. But that affection is not a mere blind tenderness of memory; it is a reflective preference of reason and experience. If we are to quit our atomic condition at all, we must either select a form of combination already tried, or invent a new one. An original invention may wait for an ecclesiastical Solon or Lycurgus; and, till his appearance, we may be content to recover the order which was wrenched from our fathers in their time of outlawry and exile,—an order that still lives and thrives throughout the most popular churches of the Reformed Christendom. Avoiding Theocracy in both its forms, viz., the Antinomian “Rule of Saints,” and the Catholic rule of Priests, it allows all duties to be sacred, and would simply entrust both civic and spiritual affairs to the best citizens. Its constitution is neutral to all the shades of Christian doctrine, and has therefore room for the catholicity we need. It creates no right without its duty, confers no power except on qualification, and vests no authority but by voluntary trust. It plants everywhere, in villages as in towns, a frugal yet educated ministry, with culture philosophical and moral, historical and theological, rather than classical and æsthetic, and therefore more near and quickening to the popular intelligence and feeling. If there is still in us that which is *worth organising*, what better form do we need than this? I know it is not to be done by a wish. But neither does it quite require a miracle. I see the obstacles; you need not pile up before me the mountain of difficulty. I shall only reply, “If we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, we shall say to this mountain, Be thou removed! and it shall be cast into the sea.”

---

The discussion was opened by Mr. HARRY RAWSON (Manchester), as follows:—  
Mr. Chairman,—The duty assigned to me, as the opener of our present discussion, is, I feel, a great honour, and, at the same time, involves great responsibilities. For many months, we have been looking forward with eager curiosity to the address to which it has now been our privilege to listen. Can we be too thankful that to our learned and distinguished friend, strength and health have been vouchsafed, enabling him once more to instruct and delight us from the rich stores of his wisdom and experience, and to reflect upon our gathering to-day the lustre of his gracious and most welcome presence.

Now, on whatever point we fail to agree, we shall at any rate concur in the

statement that something is rotten in our state, and urgently demands amendment. In our newspapers, from our platforms, from our pulpits, in our social circles, we are perpetually adjured to do something to relieve us from the grievances and complaints so prevalent amongst us. In the year 1869 a venerable minister, whose name will ever be cherished amongst us, and most of all in the church at Mill Hill, Leeds, read before the British and Foreign Unitarian Association a paper which he briefly and characteristically termed "What is the Matter?" and in the course of his address, he dealt with many of the grievances which are so commonly spoken of amongst us. Now, in some respects this is not an unhealthy sign; for dissatisfaction is, I presume, the basis or condition of all improvement whatever. An individual or a State, "shut up in measureless content," is on the downward grade. Apathy is a sure precursor of impotence, decay, and death.—Now, it is utterly impossible in the time to which I am properly enough limited, to travel over the wide field of illustration and remark, which our esteemed friend has mapped out for us. Roughly speaking, I conceive his aim to be,—the establishment of a new organisation modelled on that of the Free Kirk of Scotland. This organisation is to embrace all the Unitarian and other Free Churches of Great Britain and Ireland, to which every congregation should make an annual pecuniary contribution. The functions of this organisation, meeting annually as a General Assembly, are to be two. First, the formation of a feeling of unity and the cultivation of common sympathies; and in the second place, the oversight of the character and efficiency of the ministry, and the promotion of its due maintenance. Now, I shall assume that we are perfectly agreed as to the supreme importance of these aims. We are concerned only with the question, whether the scheme now suggested is feasible and sound?

When I was kindly favoured, three weeks ago, by Dr. Martineau, with a brief outline of the plan which it was his intention to propound to us to-day, I am bound to say that I regarded it with a judgment more favourable than subsequent reflection has confirmed. In the first place, I cannot look hopefully on the prospect of establishing amongst us a governing body such as is proposed. I am sorry, indeed, to feel this difficulty; and if, in the course of this discussion, it should be qualified or removed, no one would rejoice more than I. I will not say it is impossible. A great warrior once said, that impossibilities were things to be overcome; but even he found, on the rock of St. Helena, a considerable difficulty in translating his maxim into practice. Now, the pecuniary difficulties in the way are also considerable. Our congregations are not, in my opinion, strong enough to bear the additional burden which is proposed. Dr. Martineau takes a very optimistic view of the possibility of raising from every member of every congregation 4d. or 6d. per week. Some of us who have, for a great number of years, been acting as treasurers, committee-men, or secretaries to our religious societies, can hardly entertain so pleasant an opinion on these points. We know not only a large number of non-subscribing congregations, but

a considerable number of *non-subscribing* members. Well, then, there would be incurred the expense of sending representatives to this General Assembly ; and as, of course, you would want to send the humbler members of the congregation, leaving the richer men to pay their own way, a fund would have to be provided by each congregation for this particular purpose. And I happen to know, as Treasurer of the Provincial Assembly of Lancashire and Cheshire, that this, in some of our smaller congregations, is not a slight difficulty ; although, with the energy that characterises the working classes of the district from which I come, it is very often surmounted.—Then, I don't think our people are likely to take to the idea of the central controlling authority. Their instincts of self-reliance are against it. Their passionate love for the autonomy of their congregations is against it ; and they will fear the inquisitorial and tyrannical tendency to which all ecclesiastical assemblies have been addicted, whether called synods or presbyteries, of interfering with the individual rights of conscience, and of attempting to impose restrictions upon the progress of thought. This has left on the pages of ecclesiastical history many a dark stain.—Then, I think it is possible,—is it not ?—that the emancipation of our Presbyterian ancestors from the thralldom of orthodox views was contemporaneous with the very decay and disappearance of the old Presbyterian form ? Again, you will have all the difficulty to meet of agreeing upon the proposed name ; and I don't know any subject which is more apt than this to cause irritating controversy and dissension.

It is perfectly reasonable to ask, Have I nothing to urge but objections ? Well, I have one or two things to say. In the first place, our congregations are by no means destitute, at present, of agencies for the culture of an interest in each other's welfare. I am of opinion that it is better to develop, stimulate, and enlarge existing institutions than to start new ones. However that may be, let us see whether we have not already a considerable number of resources for cultivating this desirable feeling of a common interest and sympathy. Dr. Martineau himself incidentally mentioned several ; I will give you more :—In the North, we have the Northumberland and Durham Unitarian Christian Association, we have the Yorkshire Unitarian Association, we have in my own neighbourhood the Provincial Assembly of Lancashire and Cheshire, we have the North and East Lancashire Unitarian Mission, the Accrington District Union, the Manchester District Unitarian Association, and the East Cheshire Union. In the Midlands, there is the Midland Christian Union, and the North Midland Presbyterian and Unitarian Association. In the East, there is the Eastern Union of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. In Ireland, there are Presbyteries and Unitarian Associations ; and in Scotland, the Scottish Christian Association. In the South of England, there are the Southern Unitarian Association, the South Wales Unitarian Association, the London District Unitarian Society ; and last, but not least, the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. And I cannot refrain, when mentioning the name of this important Association, from expressing the high estimation with

which, for many years, I have regarded its services to the principles of religious truth which we hold in common. I desire to point out what is too often forgotten, that it is to *promote principles*, and not to *propound a dogma*, that the Association was founded, and that it exists. Its contributions—by the circulation of books and tracts, and by lectures and discussions—to the cause of free enquiry and of rational religion, have been innumerable and invaluable. It has helped to keep alive the faith and courage of many a struggling band. It has distributed pecuniary aid to hundreds of congregations, where “a friend in need” has been “a friend indeed;” and my personal observation leads me to say that its Councils have been sagacious, and industrious, and that they have administered its affairs in a broad and catholic spirit. The Association deserves—and I am glad at this moment to plead its cause—far greater encouragement, sympathy, and support, than it has ever yet received.

Now, my point is this—that all these institutions are doing something, and are capable of doing much more, in the direction of sustaining and promoting the interest and the common welfare of the congregations composing them. You see, they are grouped according to natural and local situation and requirements. Their meetings are held within easy distance of each other. They understand each other’s conditions and needs far better than is possible to the larger and more general assembly.

But I must pass to the second great proposal or scheme which we have had laid before us—the supervision of the character and the efficiency of the ministry, and the provision of an adequate material support. Now, I intend to speak plainly; and I wish to say, with all the emphasis I can command, that there is a crying need for much closer vigilance as to character and efficiency than now exists. No grievance is so serious, none so acutely and widely felt, as the intrusion into our pulpits of incompetent and untrained men, and especially of persons of doubtful or unknown antecedents. I can tell, and I see in this audience those who could add other illustrations, of many cases where, from the absence of this vigilance, our pulpits have been disgraced and our congregations permanently injured. Unless some of our people are wiser than they often are, and manifest a higher regard for their principles, a truer self-respect and a more generous consideration for the sister churches, this deplorable state of things will continue. Herein lies, indeed, let me say—and I say it emphatically—herein lies the chief difficulty of our case. If our congregations are ever willing to catch at the first plausibility, and allow themselves to be dazzled with oratorical fireworks, or tempted by the lower stipends of schemers, all your advising councils or other apparatus will be futile and vain.

Then I think we are not altogether without resource in this matter of the fitness of candidates for the ministry in the institutions which already exist, and which are well supported on the whole, and are doing good work. I venture to think we have in our Sustentation and Augmentation Funds some means for promoting the

efficiency of the ministry, and a reasonable rate of remuneration. Of course we take out from this category the larger congregations ; they are self-helpful and self-dependent ; they neither seek external aid nor need it. It is the smaller and less competent that naturally gravitate towards these funds.

Here I want to interpose a remark on Dr. Martineau's suggestion of a uniform minimum of £150. per annum. I submit, with the utmost possible respect to him, that the following are considerations not entirely devoid of force :—In the first place, the quality of the service rendered is very different in many ways. In the second place, would there not be some danger that certain congregations would come to regard a sum recommended by a competent authority as fairly adequate ; and would not the minimum possibly be converted into the maximum ? Then, there is this difference :—For young men leaving college, £150. per annum is a very fair income, but to a minister of several years' standing, who, in the meantime, has added to his cares a family, £150. is a very inadequate stipend. Then there are congregations who differ very widely in respect of their own contributions. I know of many illustrations of this. In case No. 1, the endowments are £165. per annum, and the congregation's subscriptions are £113. In No. 2, the endowments are £95. ; the congregation raises, in various ways, £16. In No. 3 case, those who are dead and gone—the Presbyterian forefathers, who are quietly lying in the chapel yard—left endowments to the amount of £80. per annum, but the present occupants of the pews and other advantages, contribute only the sum of £18. per annum. On the other hand, to show how great these inequalities are, in another congregation there is not a penny of endowment, yet the congregation—by no means a large one—raise £170. ; and in my own neighbourhood, in Manchester, we have working-men's congregations, where not a farthing of endowment exists, but where the whole expenses of minister, organist, gas and water, and everything else, are defrayed by the members.

Now, the funds to which I have referred have these peculiar and incomparable advantages, that when they are asked for grants they can with perfect reason lay down their own conditions. When a congregation applies for an additional grant, it is asked, "What are you doing?" — "So and so." "Well, if you will raise £10. or £15. more, we will give you £20. or £30." So, you see, a stimulus is applied at once, and I can assure you from personal knowledge that in a great number of cases congregations have, for the first time in this way, done themselves credit, and enabled their minister to derive a much augmented income. Another condition required is, that a minister must be approved, and be a man of known capacity ; and a preference is always given to one who has received either a college or other adequate ministerial training. Then the managers require that a regular report shall be sent every six or twelve months as to the work done. In this way, some oversight is maintained. Great advantages have accrued from an arrangement to interchange information and facts with each other, so as to avoid the great danger, which is very obvious, of over-lapping. Well, now, the

managers of these funds, I may add, are well-informed persons: they have an accurate knowledge which can only be obtained through local sources; they are ministers and laymen, who are generally persons of high authority and considerable influence; they meet at stated times, and in different parts of the country, and can supervise the Augmentation Fund in the North, and the Sustentation Fund in the South. I think, in this way, you have very considerable means for supplying advice or other aid.

Some discussion then ensued as to resuming, at a later stage, the consideration of Dr. Martineau's address, and it was ultimately agreed to adjourn the discussion until Thursday afternoon, when Dr. Martineau was expected to be present, and would explain any points on which misunderstanding might exist. The Conference then adjourned for luncheon.

---

According to the above-mentioned arrangement, the discussion on Dr. Martineau's Paper took place in the Town Hall, at 2-30 p.m., on Thursday, 26th April, but the report of the debate is introduced here that it may be read in connection with his Paper.

FREDERIC NETTLEFOLD, Esq., again took the Chair, and said,—As there will be, in all probability, a large number of speakers this afternoon, we must not waste a single moment in commencing. Perhaps, it would be convenient for me to say what we propose doing this afternoon. We propose to continue the discussion on Dr. Martineau's paper until twenty minutes past four o'clock, when Dr. Martineau will be good enough to reply, so that time will be given to anyone who wants to catch the train to London. I hope nobody will leave the hall until the discussion is ended.

Mr. HARRY RAWSON, one of the Secretaries, read a letter, addressed to the Honorary Secretaries of the Conference (Messrs. J. S. Mathers, and J. W. Connon), as follows:—

“OAKFIELD, WAVERTREE,

LIVERPOOL, April 23rd, 1888.

“GENTLEMEN,

“I much regret having to return the tickets and card, you have been good enough to send me. I am greatly disappointed, but I am not able to go from home at present. I have long felt an anxious interest in the condition of our weaker churches and their ministers, and, if opportunity served, was looking to have a part, on Wednesday, in the consideration of a scheme by Dr. Martineau,

for the wise and effective support of all the churches of our body willing to accept it. Some kind of organisation to ascertain the congregations belonging to us, and entitled, for their work's sake, to be maintained becomingly, will be necessary for the complete sustentation of churches, every minister of which is to be honoured and honourable in his place. Not without organisation for this purpose, will our whole body have sufficient confidence that the work of sustentation is thorough and discriminating, to be willing to supply the requisite means for this high form of brotherly fellowship, more spiritual than pity or compassion.

" Faithfully yours,

"JOHN HAMILTON THOM."

The Rev. JOSEPH WOOD (Birmingham) resumed the discussion on Dr. Martineau's address. He said: While I cannot at the present moment adopt all the suggestions offered to us by Dr. Martineau, I may express my gratitude to him for the splendid vindication he has given us of the historical catholicity of our churches, and for the example he has given us of hope and courage in old age, proposing to us, as he does, that we should enter upon a path of almost radical reform. He is like Ulysses in his old age, who felt that—

"Something ere the end—  
Some work of noble note  
May yet be done."

And it will indeed be a "work of noble note" if Dr. Martineau persuades us to so revolutionise our church that that which is now our weakness shall be turned into strength. I suppose that nearly every minister present has been asked during the last four-and-twenty hours, "Are you willing to become an English Presbyterian?" And I have observed that the answer has been "Well, upon conditions." Now, some important questions have to be answered, I think, upon which I am bound to say that we do not get very much light from Dr. Martineau's Paper. Some important questions must be answered before we are ready to be converted. There are two or three difficulties upon which we want a little more light. I do not think our difficulty is the financial one. I do not agree with Mr. Rawson that this would be insuperable. I think there is strength and vitality enough in our churches to overcome what appears to many people an objection at the outset. It might be, indeed, that we could not raise, to begin with, £33,000. a year, but if the various funds which already exist for augmentation of ministers' salaries could be consolidated, and could be worked in harmony with the new fund suggested, then I do not think there would be any difficulty in raising the required sum. Dr. Martineau's Paper brings us face to face with two questions: first, Is the congregational principle worth preserving? and, secondly, Can we retain that which is most valuable in the congregational polity while we adopt the Presbyterian form of church government? Some time ago Mr. Gladstone published an article called "Is the Church of England

worth preserving?" and it was said that the mere asking of the question suggested a doubt. I think the doubt has already entered into many of our minds as to whether the congregational system, as at present worked among us, is indeed worth preserving. It is true that to many of us it is very dear. If we have done any good work at all, it has been under its flag. Our associations, our traditions, our modes of work, are all congregational, and it will not be an easy thing for us to take up with a new system. On the other hand, those of us who most value the congregational system are the most keenly alive to the weaknesses and deficiencies that exist amongst us. There are two things which the congregational system secures when it is worked in its entirety. They are, first, the isolation of the congregation ; and, secondly, that the strong shall *not* help the weak. Not long ago, we had a discussion on this subject in the Midland counties, and one of our ministers,—a man of singular honesty of character and independence of mind,—made this remarkable confession. He said : "I have been fighting all my life in struggling churches for freedom, for independence, for individualism ; but I begin now to feel that it would be well for me if I came under orders, and that somebody would take me in hand, and tell me what to do ; would put me down in a particular place, and give me definite work, so that I had no longer to contend for this freedom, this individualism." The feeling that was expressed by my friend is, I think, felt in some way by us all. There is a wide-felt need among us for more coöperation, for a closer fellowship, and for a better discharge of our duties, one to another, especially for the better discharge of the duties which the strong churches owe to the weak. But there are some things in the congregational polity which, it seems to me, cannot be given up. We cannot give up the independence of the congregation ; we cannot give up our freedom for ministers as well as other people, from anything like a theological test. I do not care at all whether the theological test, the particular theological pill, is as big as the ordinary bolus of the ordinary practitioner, or whether it is a mere homeopathic globule ! I object to the principle of a test of any kind whatever,—that is to say, of a theological test. Is it possible so to limit the powers of the central and controlling body that there shall be no interference with the independence of the congregation ? If I understand Dr. Martineau aright, this is not possible. The choice of ministers, which is one of the most important functions of a congregation, must be limited by the regulations of a body that collects and distributes the funds. Now, some features of this alteration we should all welcome. If there can be appointed a central body which will guarantee to us, in the first place, that the men who come into our ministry are men of character ; secondly, that they are men of adequate scholarship ; and, thirdly, that they have an adequate theological training to fit them for their work,—then, I think, we shall all welcome the operations of such a central committee. But is there to be no addition to this ;—any test of theological opinion ?

Dr. MARTINEAU : No.

Mr. Wood: Well, let us view this fairly, because it does not seem to me possible that we can collect our funds and distribute them for the maintenance of the ministry, without laying down some conditions as to who and what this ministry must be. I think we want a little more light on that point. Let us get to the concrete. Are we, on the one hand, to ask my friend Mr. Carey Walters, whose ideas and methods of work are of one school, to coöperate, on the other hand, with our friend Mr. Voysey, and are they both to be sustained from the common fund? I do not know whether this is a difficulty which has been considered. I am asking for information, for I think it is a point that requires to be cleared up, whether there is to be any kind of theological test whatever applied to the ministers who receive this help. Are the men among us who are simply Theists—men who for conscientious reasons cannot use the Christian name, to be included or not? I venture to make a suggestion, which, it appears to me, may enable us to get over this particular difficulty. Can we not take the financial part of Dr. Martineau's scheme for the maintenance of the ministry, without creating either Presbyteries or Synods? Cannot the money be raised and distributed by a simple committee, through our local organisations, to any minister elected by a church in fellowship with, and recognised by that Association? In that case there will be no question of theological test applied to the minister. If the church which elects him is in association with the local body, this is all the central body will have to inquire into. That appears to me to be a method of combining the great and particular advantage of Dr. Martineau's scheme, together with the utmost freedom for the minister. For my own part, I cannot help feeling that what we want much more than improved machinery, is a larger and a deeper spiritual life, which, if it is with us, will turn any machinery to account; but, if it be absent, no machinery will bring forth the fruits we desire. It is not machinery, the most perfect in the world, that will give us a Travers Madge, or a Lawrence Scott. I don't undervalue the use of wise methods of action; but the history of the church tells us that pretty nearly any methods are useful where there is earnestness and spiritual vitality; and, without these, even the best methods of action become like the heavy armour which half smothered the feeble man. I do not disparage organisation; but I say that courage is more than drill, and a heart on fire is more than the most perfect machinery. There are those who tell us we are doomed to fail—and there are evidences of failure on many hands, although, thank God, there are also many evidences of success; but if we fail, to what is it due? It is not due to the shortening of God's arm; it is not due to the weakness of our gospel, nor is it due to the unpopularity of our principles; nor do I believe it is due in any large degree to the methods of our working. It is we who are to blame. Our way of presenting our principles has not been earnest and flexible enough; our hold on God has not been strong enough; our devotion to our cause has not been loyal enough; our own life has not been strong enough. Improved machinery by all means, but it is more life that we want.

"Tis life whereof our nerves are scant,  
More life, and fuller that we want."

Mr. J. R. BEARD (Treasurer to the Home Missionary Board) said : Mr. Chairman,— To my mind it is impossible to exaggerate the importance which this subject has for our body, if I may thus designate so headless an entity, which at the present time should rather be described as a circle, composed entirely of radii, our object being to provide it with a centre and an ever-widening and extending circumference. It would seem an altogether useless waste of your time to argue the general necessity of organisation as a method of *accumulating, harmonising, and directing* force—which is life—whether in the material or spiritual world. The analogies of the universe lead us to expect all life to find expression through organisation, and there is a general, and, as I think, a growing conviction among the individuals that go to form the various churches here represented, that a more complete organisation is absolutely necessary, to give effectual expression and a more active development to the Free Christianity that we hold dear. Instead, then, of addressing myself to the general question, I would rather suggest one or two leading features, which, in my opinion, should form a part of any scheme of organisation or union of the Free Christian Churches. And here I would say that, being myself more desirous of united and organised action, than anxious about a name, I should willingly accept any designation for the union that would enable the largest number of existing churches to rank themselves under its banner. But it seems to me that there is nothing in the title that I have suggested, viz., “The Union of Free Christian Churches,” to prevent any retaining the honoured name of Unitarian, Presbyterian, or General Baptist for their own particular chapel or cause, while joining in a union on the ground of common love for Christ and common freedom from doctrinal trammels. In the first place, then, such a union should be founded and developed throughout on the principle of individual representation. Each member of every church should not only, as at present, have a voice in its management, but also in the election of the central committee of the Union, which may be done by each congregation appointing a delegate or delegates either from their own members or otherwise. And, further, I would have the committees of all educational institutions, missionary enterprises, sustentation funds, and kindred efforts, that rank themselves under the Union, similarly appointed. On a certain fixed day in the year each congregation should receive a precept from the Union requiring them to appoint their representatives to the various committees; and, if it were urged that this would lead to too large committees, I would suggest that congregations might be grouped into provinces, and each province proceed to the election of the central committees. The detail—the manner of election—is a matter for consideration; but the important principle is that every member of every one of our congregations should feel that he has a voice in the management of each and all of our institutions, that the power is in his hands ;—hence will grow the feeling of responsibility. At present there are many—nay, I may almost say most—of those that join in our services and call themselves of us, who care for nothing but the individual church or Sunday school, aye, or even the mere class in

which they are working,—to whom the Home Missionary Board is a mere name, and the Manchester New College a far-off cry; who think of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association as “some London affair,” and of the Sustentation Fund as “something Mr. Rawson has to do with.” But if these men and women were called together once a year to assist in choosing the managers of these institutions, it is impossible but what their interest would be awakened, and a quickened sense of responsibility result in increased funds and larger means for usefulness. It is, I believe, generally estimated that, besides the thousands within the ranks of other churches that sympathise with our faith, there are some 30,000 members of our Unitarian, Presbyterian, General Baptist, and other Free Christian Churches. Of these, about 1,500, or 5 per cent., subscribe to the British and Foreign Unitarian Association; 522, or 1 $\frac{1}{4}$  per cent., subscribe to the Home Missionary Board; and 427, or less than 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., subscribe to Manchester New College. And having, for purposes in which I am interested, frequently compared the subscription lists of these and all other of our principal institutions and enterprises, I am sure there are not 2,000 out of the 30,000 that in any way contribute to the support of any of our various forms of activity,—for the same names recur again and again in all the lists, and the smaller are only a duplicate *in petto* of the larger. Here an active local treasurer gains wider support for one institution, and there another has more subscribers; but practically the funds come out of few purses, and are diverted most largely into those channels that are nearest at hand and most assertive. What is the consequence? That those causes which are situated in the midst of large communities are best supported, though most capable of self-support, and those in outlying districts dwindle and fail, because they can only appeal to the rich few rather than to the zeal of the whole body. Dr. Martineau, a little time ago, made an eloquent appeal on behalf of these outlying causes; but it is only by a more effective organisation, and that of a thoroughly representative character, that the responsibility for these causes can be brought home to the minds and hearts of the mass of our people. And, to my mind, no religious organisation founded otherwise than on a thoroughly popular basis has any future before it. It is not now the rich few, but the voting many, that for good or evil sway the world. If we would make *them* feel that *we* have a Gospel for *them*, good news to gladden *their* hearts, it must be by affirming, not in word only, but in deed, not in speeches and sermons, but in organised church life, the universal brotherhood of man with Christ, the elder brother, and God, the Father of all. We must seek *their* union in *our* aspirations, we must ask their co-operation in our work—work that we do not want done just in our own fashion, but as mutual conference and experience may suggest. And if we can succeed in touching the hearts of the people, and in awakening the religious enthusiasm that lies latent there—then, indeed, may we shout aloud, with a great multitude, and cry, “Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!” Again, as to the committees of the various institutions that I have referred to. I often hear complaints of small attendances and want of interest;

and what wonder? Our committees are purely cöoptative. That is the reason. Some leading mind or minds dominate each and all. Members are put on the committee because they are large subscribers, or have a prominent social position, instead of as representatives of those whom we should want to interest in the work of the institution. I stand here in the midst of a body of men, most of whom are prominent in various forms of benevolent activity and in responsible offices of social and political life. I ask you all whether you take most interest and feel most pride in those positions to which you have been nominated, or in those to which you have been called by the voices of your fellow-citizens, which are instinct with their life, and in which you are cheered and strengthened by their support and approval? Some of our leading ministers, and many of our principal laymen, take little or no part in the working of our various institutions. There are in the House of Commons some seventeen or eighteen members who hold our religious views, and not one of them, so far as I know, takes any prominent part in any of our special forms of activity. And why? Not for want of ability, or they would not be where they are; but, I think, because our bases are too small—not sufficiently representative. Our causes are too individualised—we are too much a collection of atoms—there is no large whole to appeal to the imagination, no popular voice which our best men might aspire to express. And, putting aside the question of our educational and benevolent institutions, how greatly would our religious life benefit by such an organisation? It is well to worship in one's closet, but how much better to worship in unison with a large number of fellow-seekers after God, when heart thrills harmoniously to heart, and eye flashes inspiration to eye? And, yet again, how much better when our various causes are blended into one grand whole, and the individual becomes one, not of a congregation, but of a church. And to this end I would suggest that this Conference proceed to declare that it is desirable that a Union of Free Christian Churches be formed, and that a committee be appointed, to consider suggestions for organisation, and report to a future meeting to be called *ad hoc*. In regard to the composition of the committee, I think it would be well to appoint, as far as possible, only those who are desirous of such a union, however divergent in their views of methods and details of organisation. It would be worse than futile—it would be suicidal—to ask for the cöoperation of those that believe that union is undesirable. From the conflict of kindred minds struggling to a common goal, nothing but good can result; but those that hold to the axiom that any organisation is bad, and that we ought to remain individual congregations, and not become a church, can only join the committee to impede and destroy. For my own part, I am sure that if a union can be formed on any plan, it will be better than no union at all; and that if a union be formed on a thoroughly representative basis, it will carry within itself the vitality that will enable it to throw off all needless incumbrances, and accrete to itself all needful and desirable functions, until in days to come, our children's children may stand in a large place, and worship in communion with millions, instead of thousands, of the children of God.

Mr. W. A. JEVONS (Southport) said : After the way in which Dr. Martineau's Paper has been received, there seems no practical doubt that an official committee will be formed, and that a hearty attempt will be made to carry out that scheme which he has sketched for us. I therefore proceed to address myself to what I think should be one of the features of this scheme. We must endeavour to utilize this new organisation to carry out the full purposes of the Christian Church. A Christian Church is not a mere worshipping society ; it is a society for carrying out all the objects of the Christian life. Our Lord himself said He came to preach the gospel to the poor, to preach deliverance to the broken-hearted, and to restore the sight of the blind. That injunction is just as imperative this day as it was eighteen centuries ago. The great principle of the church is that Christ is ever present in it ; that the duties he imposed on his disciple are just as incumbent on us now as they were at that time, and one of our grand duties is to spread that gospel, which is so precious, among the neglected classes, the ignorant, and the vicious. We are constantly twitted by those who are verging towards socialism, with the enormous difference between the wealthy and the poor. They propose to cure this by some physical means, by the adoption of some process for the distribution of the wealth of the rich amongst the poor. We, who have studied economical science, know that this is absolutely impracticable, and that it would result in far worse evils than those they attempt to cure. We cannot, however, ignore this difficulty, which is pressing upon the Christian churches at this moment. What are we to do with that section of society which is at present standing aloof from all religion and civilisation ? When I hear people proposing those artificial remedies—local option, teetotalism, reform of the land laws, reform of this, that, or the other—it always suggests to me the answer, "Let us try a little Christianity." If we do try Christianity in this way, if we are to do any effectual good, we must do it in an organised fashion. Now, we have, for the first time in our history, a chance of doing this. I shall be told, I dare say, that there are many institutions among us which attempt to do this—particularly our domestic missions. With every respect for these earnest workers, I venture to say our domestic missions were started in a false direction. In order to make domestic missions effectual, for really dealing in a systematic fashion with the evils they aspire to deal with, they ought to be institutions common to each of our churches ; and, to my mind, no church is complete unless it has some organisation for spreading the gospel outside its own limits. I believe if we can only have this Presbyterian organisation, which Dr. Martineau has recommended, we should make an immense step in that direction. You ask me how a Presbyterian organisation would effect the object ? In the first place, the union of the congregation, the integer of the organisation, will be the local presbyteries ; and, as Mr. Rawson remarked yesterday, upon the local bodies, of which perhaps the best example is our Provincial Meeting in Lancashire and Cheshire, having a minute knowledge of the congregations, the ministers, and the wants of each locality, will

naturally fall the management of this new institution. How can that effect the improvement of the laity of our congregations? In this way: they have, at all events, got the opportunity of teaching them, exhorting them, and showing them a good example. The late Mr. William James Lampert, — than whom no man knew better the basis of the Provincial Meeting, — once told me that, not a very long time ago, it was the practice to catechise each minister in this way: “Are your congregations sound in the faith?” — meaning the orthodox. At last, the thing became so ludicrous that it was dropped. I venture to think that, for that question, another more important might be substituted: — “What are your congregations doing to evangelise the world outside themselves?” There might be a circular which every congregation, or the minister of every congregation, was obliged to answer. If any congregation has to give a negative answer, — “We are doing nothing!” — do you think it would give the same answer next year? I venture to think that, next year, there would be an endeavour to do something, — to report some small advance. In addition to that, if Dr. Martineau’s plan is carried out, the grant of £150. a-year will be in the hands, perhaps not of the Provincial Presbyteries, but of the General Assembly, who will, no doubt, act on the advice of the Provincial Assembly, that such and such a congregation and minister are, or are not, doing their duty. In the latter event, they don’t get the £150.; and I venture to think, with an organisation of this kind, we should very much more advantageously carry out the full purpose, and develop the full life of our Christian churches. We are at a very great crisis of religious development. I venture to think we do not practically understand and grasp the great power which we have in our hands. We all know what the development of Christianity has produced upon the world. We all know the great difference there is between the Christendom of the present day and the world as it was in the days of the Roman Empire; but we all feel that the Christianity, as it is practised and taught, has, to some extent, failed, and that, besides the masses of heathendom outside the Christian nations, within the Christian nations there is a vast mass of heathendom, too! Is that due to the imperfect teaching of Christianity? Surely. The Christianity that has been taught has been modified by sacerdotalism, and by the orthodoxy of Protestant sects, and has become less powerful with them than the Christianity we possess. Why? Because we recently gradually emancipated ourselves from dogmatic theology, and have enabled ourselves to go back to the Christianity as it was taught by Christ and his immediate disciples, so far as we are able to ascertain. Surely, we have in our hands a weapon more powerful than any Christian sect has, or ever had, since the days of the Apostles? Surely, it is our bounden duty to work for this great principle with all the energy we can command? If we do that, we shall be the leaders of the Christianity of the future. If we do not, the leadership of God’s Church, and the future, will be entrusted to other and to more faithful hands than ours.

The Rev. Dr. CROSSKEY: I wish to ask if I shall be in order in submitting the

following resolution :—"That a Committee be appointed to take into consideration the subject of the organisation of our churches, and, after submitting the proposals made in such ways as they may think expedient to our churches and various religious associations, be instructed to call a special meeting to receive their report." The resolution I venture to submit, it will be at once noted, recognises the extreme gravity of the proposals made, the necessity of giving them a thorough consideration, and, also, of not dismissing them to the far away future, but really coming to some understanding distinctly and clearly, whether an organisation is possible, and if so, what are the lines on which it should be effected. I submit this resolution with an intense feeling of the gravity of the crisis before us. I am absolutely convinced that the time has come when we must either make up our minds that the path we are now pursuing is the right one, and not capable of improvement, and go on our way without grumbling, and without perpetually complaining, or decide upon making some fresh departure. Nothing is more unworthy than a condition of eternal grumble and complaint. One can hardly go to a meeting without hearing questions asked why this is not so, and why that is so, and all kinds of letters pour into our papers suggesting a myriad remedies for some unapprehended disease. I say, if we are going on the right path, if our organisation is the best we can make it, for God's sake let us give up this eternal growling, and work on and do our best with what we have. But if, on the contrary, there are possible methods of organising our half-developed resources, if this be a time in which we are not merely to follow but to make history, let us open our eyes, let us have firm resolution to take any new departure that may approve itself to our judgment and to our faith. I propose, therefore, this resolution, and I can hardly do it without a few passing comments. But I wish these comments to be taken rather as extempore expressions, for one has not had twenty-four hours to think the matter over, than as committing me to any future conclusions. In fact, I would urge upon every one of us, as upon myself, the necessity of keeping open minds, and not pre-judging the question at issue. But I submit the resolution with the more confidence because it appears to me that, in one part of Dr. Martineau's Paper, he described with a fulness and an accuracy that leave nothing to be desired, the kind of union which actually exists amongst us. We are come here under several banners, but, as he told us, after all we are under one banner — we are moved by one spirit, or we should never have been here together. He stated what I have been preaching all my life, — sometimes even with almost despair at the difficulty there seems to be in making people understand it, — that, while personally, I, as a Unitarian, will declare my Unitarianism in no unfaltering breath, and should esteem it a dishonour not to give the right name to my religious beliefs, just as I would give the right name to my astronomical beliefs; yet, at the same time, this Unitarianism is a matter of individual conviction, and the great Church of God, to which we belong, works out in freedom the fulfilment of His truth. No Unitarian should be silent about

Unitarianism if he believes in it, but he should not attempt to impose upon others, much less upon generations to come, his own precise form of Christian faith. There is the ground of our unity. A Unitarian may join our churches, and express his convictions, and those who like better the name of Free Christian also join. We are one people in the expression of honest thought and common reverence for the ever-working spirit of our God. Then, Sir, the problems to be solved seem to be raised in such a way as to render some solution possible. The objects we all have at heart are the objects that underlie Dr. Martineau's Paper. Of the rightful support of the ministry, it is not for a minister to say much. We must be content with the bread that is given us; but, at any rate, I may venture to say this much, that—if we are to have an education that would train us into capable lawyers, and send us forth on an honourable career; or frequent, if we so choose, the hospitals, and have that kind of trained, scientific skill which may raise a man to the height of this world's wealth and honour,—when we select the path of the Unitarian ministry, a minimum of £150. a-year is not too much for what we have to pass through. I do not know whether the legal or the medical profession would be filled upon such terms, but I do venture to say that the ministry of the Free Christian churches of England would be. As regards the objects of our organisation, as I understand Dr. Martineau's Paper,—of course I am open to correction, having simply heard it,—he does not in any way propose any authority that will define a doctrine or impose a dogmatic test. And I think I am right in saying that he would carry that to its last issue. At any rate, I am confident that, if we are to have liberty, we must carry it out, and have the most absolute freedom from any attempt at interference with the religious life of any worshipping body of men. I think my friend, Mr. Wood, asked whether two extremely opposite teachers of doctrine would receive support from the same fund. I cannot, for any reason on earth or heaven, see why they should not. How am I compromised because another man teaches something else? That is a monstrous absurdity to me. Then, as I understand,—here again I am open to correction, and perhaps I am wrong, but I think not,—Dr. Martineau does not attempt to say that any external authority should settle that a congregation shall accept a particular man. He means, I think, that there should be a certain ministry to which certain men should belong, and not the slightest interference with the choice of the congregation would be made with respect to those men. This, I comprehend;—unfortunately, an illustration from Ireland comes into my mind, but I will drop that. I was going to say this. You all may know that there has been a considerable controversy whether special subjects are to be delegated to a new Parliament, or whether some subjects are to be reserved for Westminster, and all others outside their range, go to another Parliament—I won't say where. Now, as I comprehend Dr. Martineau, he would not hand over to the congregations just one or two subjects, leaving everything else to the governing body; but that any governing body would deal with certain specified subjects, and not interfere at every hole and corner with the free life of the congreg-

gations. Now, we come to issues on which there will be a few difficulties. I should extremely like to direct Dr. Martineau's special attention to the name and the form in which the proposals are cast—the establishment of the Presbyterian system, and the name Presbyterian. From a long and abiding experience, I desire to pay a tribute of the profoundest respect to the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. I know the life of that church—how it touches with gracious solemnity the lives of the poorest shepherd, and the fisher upon the wildest of seas. I know how, with the strong arm of its purity, it educates in the remotest places the heart and conscience of the people; and I have good reason to know, from the friendships I have formed, the intellectual freedom by which its greatest men are distinguished. But, Sir, it has another aspect. Take this name Presbyterian. Why, I read in the newspaper yesterday, immediately beneath the summons for this meeting, the following advertisement: "Presbyterian Church of England. A special sermon will be preached at morning service, Sunday next, by the Rev. W. E. Crothers; subject, 'The deity of Christ an essential part of Christian faith.'" I say this is a little confusing. Of course, you might say that the English Presbyterian Church is different from the Presbyterian Church of England, but I am rather afraid the distinction would be too subtle for the practical working of our churches, or the intelligent understanding of the masses of the people. Then, Sir, it would be a fighting name, for this reason—in every great town there is a body of very earnest Presbyterians,—Scotch Presbyterians. But, mark! There has been this change. A few years ago there was nothing but the Presbyterian Church in England, but now this is altered, and there is in existence an organised English Presbyterian Church, which is a very different thing indeed. So that I think it would be a fighting name, and I don't want another fighting name. One has had to fight for a name for many a year, and I really shrink from a name that would cause a neighbour within twenty yards of my church to make an attack upon us. We should have a duel over the question as to who were the "true blues," and who the right Presbyterians. I also think it would be unintelligible to the masses of the people. I read a judgment the other day by a certain learned judge, who had the precise case before him, but, in reading it, I failed to see that he had at all got hold of the historical question. I think the history of our churches is not on the side of Presbyterianism, but of Congregationalism; so that I venture to ask consideration with respect to the name. I do not go into the other names suggested—there is no time, even if I had inclination. But, I think, I would rather go myself for a time without a distinctive title, than run upon new rocks of difficulty. The case rather reminds me of a child I was nursing the other day—having now the honour to have a grandchild—and the nurse, I found, was keeping it indoors until it had been christened. She would not let it go out into the fresh air until it had been taken to church and named. I think we shall make a mistake if we fail to get into the fresh air because we are not christened. To conclude, there are certain principles connected with Presbyterianism which I do not think there will be any harm in

stealing, although we should not take the name. There can be no more harm in stealing those principles than there is in stripping from some of the grand old hymns, in the hymn book we owe to Dr. Martineau, those parts which bind them to the metaphysics of past ages. I do not see why we should not be able to get some system of district councils, some system of provincial assemblies—I love that old term, Provincial Assembly. Although I have not the honour to belong to it, I know what the Assembly of Lancashire and Cheshire has done, and how a representation of the laity has been appreciated. You cannot expect us ministers to work this church alone. You laymen, if we are to do anything, must not leave it to a few parsons to discuss everything. It is your church, we are your ministers. Then we have this Triennial Conference, to which we have delegates from far away Scotland, from east and west and south, moved by a great enthusiasm, although under many names, feeling one life, one heart, one spirit. We might in some way devise a system of district councils and provincial assemblies connected with the Triennial Conference, which would give firm effect to our liberty, and be a fitting home for our free theology and Christian effort. I have dropped the question of money, because if you want me to say anything, I should simply reply, that every man who bears the name of Unitarian—Free Christian or Non-Subscribing—if an Act of Parliament was passed compelling him to quadruple his subscription to-morrow, could do it perfectly well. In conclusion, I feel that we ought to take into serious consideration this question (and without any attempt, or any desire, in any way whatever, to dictate to a solitary congregation in this land), to ask ourselves how we can make more of our resources, and bind ourselves in closer fellowship, bringing our strong churches to the help of the weak. We may do it, and we ought to do it—there is enthusiasm. They tell me, sometimes, we are dying. At any rate, I take in the breath of new life at this Conference in Leeds. We are not dying, and we are very much alive. I shall not, after what I said the other night, be open to the charge of in any way under-rating the necessity of the renewed life of the soul within us. I believe nothing so intensely as that it is fading faith in God that brings weakness. It is deeper faith alone that can bring strength. I know that only out of the spirit comes the organisation ; but I also know that if, when boastful of the spirit, we say we care nothing for the body—if, relying on our feelings, we care nothing for the forms in which we may cast and mould them, and that organisation is nothing, we make a most fatal mistake. Organisation must grow out of life. Let us go back to our homes and churches, and feel that we ought, in holier reverence, to do our work. But do not put artificial constraints upon the growth of the needful organisation. Let there be the sound mind, but let us not be ascetics, as it were, and destroy the body. Through the sound mind, let the noble body be established, and live.

The Rev. JAMES HARWOOD, B.A. (Nottingham), said :—If Dr. Crosskey has not provided himself with a seconder for his motion, I shall be very happy to perform that function for him. I think the first impression made upon us

yesterday, after hearing that wonderful speech, was one of admiration at the physical vigour, and at the force of will which wielded that vigour, that enabled Dr. Martineau, in his 84th year, to address us for nearly two hours in the style that he did. But twenty-four hours' reflection has filled me with another matter for admiration, and that is, that Dr. Martineau should have been able to compress into that limited time, such an exposition of a most elaborate system, enriched, as it was, with so much historical illustration. For myself, if we adopted here the customs which obtain in another place, I should be prepared to vote for the second reading of the bill which was introduced yesterday, on the understanding that we should be at liberty to pull it about a good deal at a subsequent stage. I do not think that it is the reverential feeling for one's old tutor that leads one to come to this conclusion, for Dr. Martineau must often feel that, however dull his students may have been in catching up the lessons which he imparted, there was one lesson, at least, which they have been very apt to learn, and that is to practise independence of judgment and to go their own way. But I must say that the sympathy which I feel with a good deal of what Dr. Martineau has recommended, is due to a conviction, which in many cases, at any rate, strengthens from year to year, of the failure of the Congregational system as it has been carried out with us. Indeed, Sir, I think we carry out the Congregational system with a thoroughness and a ruthlessness which are not practised by the Congregationalists themselves. With them, there is a circle within a circle, for, I believe, I am correct in saying that the church forms only a part of the congregation. Whatever narrowness, from our point of view, may be associated with the way in which the "church" is composed, this arrangement does, at any rate, secure that those who administer the affairs of the congregation, are persons who, by character and experience, are properly qualified for the responsibility. Now, with us it is not always so, and especially in the case of the newer congregations, which have no traditions to guide them, is the need most seriously felt of that outside counsel and fellowship which Dr. Martineau's proposals would secure. In connection especially with our missionary activities, the system to which we have hitherto adhered, has been the means of destroying an immense amount of good work that ought to have been preserved and made reproductive. Of course, we have very large sympathies with the Congregationalist body, and especially so in its more recent phases, and with the newer type of men which for some years has been introduced into its ministry—many of whom are men having a very large influence upon the formation of public opinion and the development of religious thought. But, at the same time, I think experience has shown that, though that system may be adapted to the Congregationalist body itself, it certainly is not adapted to us with our traditions, and with our characteristics. Every man, and every body of men, have the defects of their qualities, and we, who insist upon individualism in its most extreme form, have the defect of that quality, and if, by any method of church organisation, we are able to qualify that, at the same time retaining all that is honourable in

connection with the exercise of individual liberty and freedom of judgment, it is a very strong argument indeed for our adopting that system. When one sees how all kinds of individual peculiarities and eccentricities are dignified by high-sounding names, and how, under cover of these, all sorts of personal pretensions are put forward in connection with religious work, I think it does behove us to remember, that while the religious life is undoubtedly the main thing to be thought of, we cannot afford to neglect a consideration of the best means of fostering and making effective whatever measure of that life exists among us. I do hope we shall not get it into our heads that this is a question of mere organisation, and the invention of machinery, as opposed to a development of spiritual life. As to the necessity of that development, and the importance which we attach to it, I think there is only one feeling in this Conference, whatever may be our views upon Congregationalism or Presbyterianism. It is most delightful to feel that we are recognising now, in a way we have not done in our past history, that we exist, not simply as a religious club to provide for our own spiritual needs, but are recognising the duty we owe to the world. And, in trying to fulfil that duty, we must, as prudent and reasonable men, recognise that some means are more suitable than others for carrying out the work. For myself, I think that Presbyterianism, in a more or less modified form, is the form most suitable for our particular case, and for the habits and traditions which we inherit. Dr. Crosskey said, just now, that he had not been able, in the Midlands, to find any trace of Presbyterian discipline in our history. Well, Birmingham, of course, is the heart of the Midlands, but I venture to say there is a North Midland district. I happen to be the custodian of the minute book of the Nottingham Presbytery, which existed, I suppose, something like 200 years ago. How much of that discipline it may be desirable for us to reproduce, is not for us to settle to-day. I can only say, speaking from my own experience of three congregations, that I am exceedingly happy to have been connected with congregations in which,—thanks to the traditions they inherited, and to the character of the men who were responsible for the administration of affairs—not the slightest difficulty has ever arisen in any matter trenching upon the independence or freedom of the minister. On the other hand, I know, and many of you must know, of the very great difficulties that exist in many congregations less favourably situated, and also of the quite unnecessary amount of friction that is often caused, through the selection of unsuitable men for carrying on the organisation connected with religious life.

The Rev. R. A. ARMSTRONG said:—I support the resolution which has been moved, and am heartily glad that the subject should have the prospect of full and deliberate discussion. I think that it has its dangers, and that it will not be in any wise unpatriotic or disrespectful that we should remember those dangers to-day. Much has been said about the Congregational system, chiefly in criticism of its defects. I think there is much to be said in gratitude to the Congregational system. It was the breaking up of the Presbyteries, and the rise of Congrega-

tionalism that established our liberties. It is true that the Presbyterians did not draw up doctrinal trust deeds. But it is also true, as Mr. Harwood knows from that minute book of which I, too, was once the custodian, that they were exceedingly strict in the doctrinal limitations that they set to their ministry, and even to their lay offices. Page after page of that minute book is occupied with the record of the theological examinations of those who were candidates for office amongst our Presbyterian forefathers. It was with the gradual decline of the Presbyterian system that that perfect freedom of individual conviction which we cherish—or which I, at least, still cherish—grew up amongst us. I met two venerable Irish brethren this afternoon, who were in very high feather indeed. They said that they entirely accepted the programme which was laid before us, and that they would welcome us into the Presbyterian communion. I ask, with sincere respect for them, whether, taking our churches broadly, there is more life and more hope in our Presbyterian churches in Ireland, or in our Congregational churches in England? The fact is, Sir, that we must not forget that the Congregational system has fostered not only freedom in doctrine, but a manly initiative in religious and ecclesiastical life; and I trust that nothing will be done, nothing will be proposed, which will endanger or enfeeble that manly growth of individual character and spontaneous action, not only on the part of individual congregations, but on the part of individuals within the congregations. I did not like the sound of that term "governing body," which fell just now from one of the speakers. I don't want a governing body. I shall welcome gladly a body which, under an organised system, shall collect funds after the manner Dr. Martineau has described, and which shall only administer those funds to congregations which select their ministers from those who are approved by this Board; but any Board that goes a step further than that, I, for one, shall deplore, and I will not promise to obey. What we want is what the world has not yet seen, and I hope it may be born from these deliberations—such a balance of the Presbyterian and the Congregational systems as shall steer clear of the dangers of the one and the weaknesses of the other, and gather together the strength of both. Whether such a system be possible, I confess I don't know, but it is at least worth trying to find; and, if it be possible, it will be the very best form of ecclesiastical organisation which Christendom has yet seen. There is one other danger, Sir, on which I feel I must say one word. It has been alluded to already, wisely I think, by my friend Mr. Wood. Throughout that wonderful speech on the first reading, which we heard yesterday, Dr. Martineau used, as we knew he would use, the words of Christian terminology. It was throughout, an appeal to us to adopt some organisation of this kind for the sake of quickening the Christian life and the Christian spirit in our churches. I was glad when I heard that the name proposed did not include a Christian definition. It is easy for us to get up here and to say that we will not accept an organisation based on the Unitarian name, because, whatever affections that word has gathered around it, it does not produce a very fervent glow of

sentiment in the breasts, except of a few. But it is otherwise with the word "Christian," a word which gathers round it all the glorious memories of the Cross of Christ. There is none of us here to whom the word is not rich with most sacred and solemn associations. At the same time, there are men amongst us—there is a man in this room to-day, one of the most Christ-like men I have ever known, who from purely intellectual and critical scruple, which I in no manner share with him, refuses the Christian name. He is doing a work which shames the work of many of us, almost without fee or reward, not in the name, yet assuredly in the spirit of him whom some of us gladly call Master. He works unaided and unhelped, and he cannot take, or could not when last we conversed together, the Christian name. Are we going to include him and his church? It is a practical question which will come upon us at once. If we don't embrace him, will not some of us, who do take the Christian name, feel that we must stand outside with him, where we still can grasp his hand? Sir, I rose chiefly to speak these one or two words of warning. But I wish, at the same time that I utter the warning and the doubt which I felt it was laid upon me to speak, to express my earnest hope that the attempt now to be made may, in spite of all difficulties and dangers, prove fruitful of good, and that there may arise from it, not, indeed, a system of church government, but a system of church helpfulness, which shall graft some of the advantages associated with Presbyterian organisation on to our own Congregational system.

The Rev. J. C. STREET (Belfast): I wish to put a question or two, which might help us to come to a decision about the resolution. We are called together as a National Conference. Does "National" mean "English?" or do you include Ireland, and Scotland, and Wales? I presume by the word "National" in the way in which you have used it, you mean to include all; but the proposed name for the body you are about to establish is "English Presbyterian." Now, the great body of the churches from England here are not Presbyterian, though some of them are traditionally so, but in Ireland, which you apparently exclude, nearly all its congregations are Presbyterian in some form or another; and I observe that in the committee you are proposing to appoint to carry out this resolution, which is national, you carefully exclude Scotland, which knows something of Presbyterianism, and Ireland, that knows a great deal.

The CHAIRMAN: No.

Rev. J. C. STREET: The Chairman says "No;" and I am sure he will correct me by and by; but, so far as I can remember the names proposed for the committee, there are no representatives from Ireland or Scotland.

Rev. Dr. CROSSKEY: I am Scotch or half Scotch.

Rev. J. C. STREET: Ah! Yes; half. National or Imperial, which shall it be? I was greatly interested in the speech of Mr. Wood, and agreed to a large extent in what he said; but sometimes we apply general principles to local and personal associations. Mr. Wood thinks that if you had some sort of organisation which

would refer to local organisations some of its functions, you would have little difficulty. For instance, in the administration of this fund you are talking about ; if the local presbytery, or the local body with which particular churches were associated, had the administration, then there would be no difficulty. But would there not ? It was the application of that general principle that made me ask where should I be ? I am in the North of Ireland ; I am the minister of a church that has a history of 200 years ; for a large part of its history it was Presbyterian ; now it is no longer Presbyterian, but Congregational ; it belongs to no presbytery, though there are local presbyters ; and if to the local presbyters you refer this matter, perhaps Mr. Wood will tell me where I shall be. Sir, I have considered with as much care as I can, since I heard Dr. Martineau's wonderful address, one or two aspects of it. I had hoped that a resolution would be passed immediately at the close of Dr. Martineau's address, that that address be referred to our churches for consideration, without any discussion whatever. I don't think any of us were competent at the moment, nor are we now, to discuss all the matters in that wonderful Paper, but, so far as I could consider it, it struck me that Dr. Martineau, in dealing with the financial aspect of the question, was remembering the few of the large, influential, and wealthy congregations with which he more or less had been connected in years gone by, and I wondered whether he knew of a hundred or more of our congregations that, with all the means in their power, cannot to-day raise even the £50. I can put my hand upon a large number of such congregations that don't raise £50. from all sources by their personal gifts, and I have been wondering whether Dr. Martineau has been taking the average at a much higher rate than many of us would think at all possible. But it is not merely a question of finance ; it is a question of organisation. I agree with the thought that we should devise some plan to gather together the scattered elements of our church. I don't think it is possible to do so under any Presbyterian organisation whatever. My experience and observation convince me that such a thing cannot be ; and when questions like these are raised as to whether or not, supposing there be a Presbyterian organisation, there will be difficulties experienced as to theology, my experience and observation lead me to say—Yes ; there will be ; and I say the Presbyterianism connected with our own body, with which I am familiar, is Presbyterianism which insists upon certain theological requirements. I know that Dr. Martineau would not connect himself with anything like a test of theology for a candidate for the ministry. I go with him for an educational test, or an examination of the moral qualities of a man, and his fitness for public work, but draw the line most sharply at an attempt to apply a theological test. I support this resolution because it is a resolution of delay ; because it gives time to think ; because it pledges to no definite action ; because it leaves us free to examine every detail of this great scheme of Dr. Martineau's. I believe that out of that great scheme something may come which will draw us together as a compact body ; whether it will be as a church or not I don't know. I don't know whether I under-

stand, in this organised sense, what a church means. I understand something, or think I do, of that great Church of God which is larger than any section of the Christian church, or than the Christian church itself—that great Church of God which comprehends within it the devout souls belonging to humanity all the world over; and I confess, for my part, I should be unwilling to see any small church launched upon the sea of troubled waters about us. But I do see the possibility of an organisation of a body of men for practical religious work, who see eye to eye with regard to certain practical issues, and I think probably the bones of the scheme are to be found in that which has been submitted to us by Dr. Martineau. I support the resolution.

MR. HERBERT NEW (Evesham) said : I cannot find words to speak the wonder and admiration with which I was, yesterday, impressed, and shall, for a long time, be impressed, by the words which we heard from the Rev. Dr. Martineau. I want time to think over them. I want to have the Paper put before us in all its fulness. I think we had reason to expect, from what we heard yesterday, that we were hearing then a small portion, and that a fuller setting forth of this remarkable statement awaited us, and that we should receive it very soon. I hope it will be committed to the committee of this Triennial Conference, to insert it amongst the papers which they will immediately print, as they have done the papers of the two previous Conferences, and I should like to have the Paper before all the churches before we come to any other resolution than one of deep gratitude. I think we may fairly, from this Conference, commend the attention to this Paper of all the churches whom we represent. That is as far as I think we can go. I think the suggestion, that the members of this Conference should be called together at some particular time, between this and the next Conference, is one that strikes at the root of our constitution. We are a Triennial Conference. I conceive that, in another half-an-hour's time, the Conference will be at an end ; and the only link between the present and the future Conference is the appointment of the small committee, to make arrangements for the meeting. We can't, I believe, call the members of this Conference together. They came as delegates to this particular meeting, to consider the greatness of this question. I believe the mode in which this resolution is to be placed before us should be somewhat modified. Let us, therefore, commend the matter, in any way, to our several congregations ; and we may, perhaps, put it into the resolution, to ask Dr. Martineau to let us have the Paper, to print it in full. But, I think, the appointment of a committee at this time, particularly of a small committee, will be simply the launching into space of a power which we, as a Conference, could no longer control. If the resolution could be modified, I think it would be more completely in accordance with our constitution and views. It would leave us full of gratitude and wonder at what we have heard, and full of readiness to find the way, by conversation with our friends, and conferences with our churches, to give some substantial suggestions with regard to the mode in which it could be carried

out ; for we must go back to our churches, and tell them what has happened here, and what a future is suggested to us, supposing that our churches see their way to accept it.

A DELEGATE : Would it be possible for this Conference to adjourn its own meeting ?

Mr. JONES : I feel very deeply the remarks Mr. New has made, and I feel the responsibility. We don't reform a system of 100 or 200 years in a week or so, and I cannot consent to sit on the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN : The only difference between this resolution and Mr. New's suggestion is, whether we should have a meeting of Conference before three years, or whether we should delay this subject for three years. Very probably, indeed, nothing will be determined upon until our next Conference. This is not a question that can possibly be settled in a week, a month, or a year. The first thing this Committee will have to do, will be to send round these proposals to all our religious associations, all our churches and congregations, and invite opinions and remarks from north, south, east, and west, even including Ireland. And when I said "No" to Mr. Street just now, it was with regard to Scotland. We had put a gentleman on the committee thoroughly up in the working of the Sustentation Funds in Scotland, Mr. Bowie.

Mr. STREET : Why not Mr. Drummond ?

The CHAIRMAN : It is no good having on too large a number of names, or else all the time is spent in conversation, and nothing is done. I should be glad and proud to put anybody's name in substitution for my own, but I am strongly disinclined to increase the numbers of this committee.

A DELEGATE : The unrepresentative character of that committee will compel me to vote against the resolution. I move that the name of the Rev. Alexander Gordon be added.

Dr. CROSSKEY : It is not intended to pre-judge anything, it is merely to prepare.

Mr. NEW : I object to the calling of this Conference together again. There will be another Conference elected in three years' time. Don't let us break the integrity of our National Conference, which has its three years' birth and its three years' blossom.

Dr. CROSSKEY : Of course, we don't mean the same delegates, but another Special Conference.

The CHAIRMAN : We can call together a Special National Conference to consider this one subject, and I think it is a subject sufficiently large and great to warrant a Conference on it alone. And as soon as this committee, to the best of their ability, have collected opinions from all our religious associations, churches, and everybody who can throw light upon the subject and give us help, then, when we are prepared with some proposal to make, we can summon a National Conference or meeting. We will strike out the words "of this Conference," and substitute "and be instructed to call a special meeting of representatives of all our bodies throughout the country to receive their report."

After some discussion, the name of the Rev. Robert Drummond, of Edinburgh, was added to the committee ; which then stood as follows :—

|                       |                           |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Rev. Dr. MARTINEAU    | Rev. R. A. ARMSTRONG      |
| Dr. ASPLAND           | Rev. W. C. BOWIE          |
| Mr. J. R. BEARD       | Professor J. E. CARPENTER |
| Mr. JOSEPH LUPTON     | Rev. Dr. CROSSKEY         |
| Mr. F. NETTLEFOLD     | Rev. H. E. DOWSON         |
| Dr. ODGERS            | Rev. R. B. DRUMMOND       |
| Mr. H. RAWSON         | Rev. J. PAGE HOPPS        |
| Mr. A. W. WORTHINGTON | Rev. S. A. STEINTHAL      |

The resolution appointing the committee was then put to the vote, and adopted.

Dr. MARTINEAU : Allow me to point out that, in deliberating upon the scheme which was explained yesterday, they will deliberate upon what necessarily applies exclusively to Great Britain ; for the simple reason that Ireland has already its church organisation complete. The gentlemen to whom you refer are already members of presbyteries or synods, and can exercise in their own church the very functions we are proposing to create. Therefore, if you invite them into a corresponding system in this country, you put them into two churches. For that reason, it was impossible for me to include Ireland, which already has what we still need. Mr. Street asks, “Am I to be left out in the cold ?” Who has placed him there ? He tells us himself that his congregation, when he went to it, was Presbyterian, but by his advice it has become Congregationalist, and is not included in the Irish system. Is he, then, to be left out ? Well, a Congregationalist leaves himself out ; because to be a Congregationalist is to disown church organisation altogether, and to insist upon the completeness and perfection of each congregation within itself, without relation to others. The question, therefore, answers itself. The reason will thus be plain why, in the statistics which I gave of our 220 regular congregations, I did not count Irish ones ; the question now opening upon us having been already solved by their own history and constitution. It would be mere trifling with our friends across the Channel to invite them to send representatives to deliberate on the wisdom of establishing a *fait accompli*.

In the few minutes that remain I can do little justice to the various thoughtful remarks that have been made. I regret this the less, because I would not have this subject fall, through fault of mine, into controversial form, ere it has been approached in a spirit of careful and impartial deliberation, and it is difficult, in off-hand reply to off-hand criticisms, to avoid apparent antagonism between those who should be “friends in council” only. Had I been more fortunate in conveying a correct impression to my hearers of the proposed reform, it would have escaped by far the greater part of the criticisms which have been advanced. As the case has been put this afternoon, I agree much more with my critics than with myself. If I saw any danger of such issues as Mr. Wood seems to consider not

improbable, I should be the first to denounce the scheme which can lead to them. He regards it as a merit of the Congregational system that it secures the independence of the minister; and supposes me to advocate some sort of control over the minister, other than that of his own congregation, in his action and his teaching. Nothing can be further from my thought than to interpose any extraneous influence between minister and people, or to restrict the present freedom of his conscience. The conditions imposed upon him are to be, as at present, *prior* to his assumption of the ministry,—conditions of education and character essential to his future work,—and leave him, when once he is launched, as free as the physician to his practice. If exemption is asked from these *prior conditions*, I cannot admit its reasonableness. If you secure a minimum income for service of a certain kind, you must make sure, before you establish a claim to the recompense, that it falls to those who are competent to render the service. The class, therefore, has certainly, in my view, to be created by the organised system of supervision over education and qualification which I briefly sketched. But the class once having been provided, the individual congregation is left at perfect liberty to select any one who is upon the roll of certified ministers. The independence of election, therefore, is perfectly secure; and I have proposed no controlling authority which could interfere with the subsequent exercise of his ministry. The functions of the Presbytery would involve no such interference. What would be done would be this—that each minister, and each leading lay elder, of the congregation would bring a report of the number of its members, the number of its communicants, the number of Sunday scholars and teachers, with other particulars of the work it is doing, so that the Presbytery at large—that is to say, the group of fraternal societies, would gain an insight into all that was going on. If there was any good work astir among any one of them, it would get immediately propagated through the whole set. Then, the idea that this form of coöperation necessarily leads to some authoritative confession of faith, and consequent heresy-hunting, is a pure illusion, under the conditions pre-supposed. Did we not provide that the ecclesiastical body which we organise, shall proclaim as its fundamental principle, that the unity of the Church of Christ must be maintained, not by the imposition of any rule of orthodoxy whatever, but by leaving the natural development perfectly open, and making provision for it? At this point, the question arises,—Will you allow this freedom of development to go beyond the Christian limits? Or,—if you keep within the Christian limits,—will you not have to define what those limits are, and so be betrayed into some statement of doctrinal opinion? I reply, Certainly. I do not contemplate the affiliation into one body of any but Christian Churches; and I say this, not because I doubt for a moment that non-Christian Theists may be just as good and near to God as Christian Theists, but because much that the latter retain as sacred the former deem it their duty to attack; so that the sympathies of common worship and aspiration are lost from failure of reverence for the same things. By

all means, let both form themselves into religious societies for the ennoblement and consecration of life ; but, for the best play of their mutual affections as well as of their characteristic enthusiasms, they had better do so apart. For my part, I feel a deep interest in the Theistic Churches : and where, as in India, their faith is new-born from the spontaneous action of the human soul, or disengages itself in purity from the decay of perishing superstitions, they are the hope and nursery of a great future. But where the same fundamental faith comes, as to us, not merely in the terms of an abstract truth, but in the living form of historical realisation, filling the whole distance between man and God by the relation of Sonship, so many touching pictures, so many dramatic incidents, flow into the religion, and shed their special light and colour into its ideals, that it is sure to be full of allusions and to speak in tones, uncongenial to the philosophic Theist. And, on the other hand, the Christian attendant at the church of my friend, Mr. Voysey, must lay his accounts for hearing harsh attacks on the character he most reveres, and some of his serious beliefs denounced as superstitions.

The Christian affinities are far too strong to be slighted or whittled away : and it would be an unwise defiance of natural sympathies to dedicate our united Church to anything less than the worship of God and the realisation of the Christian life. These practical ends, no doubt, imply religious convictions and historical and moral appreciations in those who pursue them. But so long as these implied contents are left alone to tell their separate tale to every worshipper, they will disturb no peace. It is not the practical presence, but the intellectual definition of belief, that starts dissension and violates the catholicity of Christendom.

Next, it is said that what we want is not organisation, but life. The opposition of organisation to life is surely a false opposition, as they can never be severed. Doubtless, we want more life : but the first thing it would do, if we had it, would be to create more organisation, instead of lessening what we have. The only practical question is, whether we already possess the instrumentality for effecting all that we are conscious of wanting, and so actually aspire to bring to pass. In answer to that question, I appeal to the spirit of this Conference itself. I greatly misinterpret it, if it does not indicate a genuine pressure towards larger and worthier grasp of our collective duty, than our present machinery enables us to compass.

If I pass without pause the reflections of Mr. J. R. Beard and Mr. Jevons, it is because my duty is limited to reply, and I am in such accord with them, that they give me nothing to answer. One explanation only is due to Mr. Jevons, lest he should attribute to the Pastorate Fund a virtue which it cannot claim. He supposed, if I did not mistake him, that the minister's receipt of the equal dividend might be made contingent on his satisfactory discharge of duty, so as to give the fund a disciplinary use. I do not propose any such discretionary power in the Finance Committee. Their business is to regard every minister on the roll as alike entitled to the equal share. His responsibility in the exercise of his ministry is to his own congregation ; with nothing behind except the power, common,

in case of discord, to himself and his people, of invoking the arbitrament of the Presbytery.—I turn, now, to the objection brought, as I fully expected, against a return to the name, Presbyterian. I have felt the difficulty, perhaps, as strongly as Dr. Crosskey. If I am less staggered by it, I believe it is because, on fairly facing it, I found it shrink, till it became clearly less than that attending any possible alternative. The question is too large for us this afternoon, and I can only suggest one or two considerations that mitigate the difficulty. The disaffection towards the word arose and grew in proportion as we ceased to be the thing. When the peculiarities of the Presbyterian order dropped away, and we became Congregational, everybody felt the inconsistency of any longer calling ourselves Presbyterians. Very well, then, take the Presbyterian order again, and set it into operation, and let everybody see that this is the order in conformity with which your churches live, and with the thing you will recover the name, and nobody will dispute your right to it. Reverse the cause which lost it, and you will regain it. On the other hand, what could be more perverse, not to say absurd, than to reinstate the thing, and deny it its name? The prefix *English* to the word *Presbyterian* will amply guard the catholic principle; because it was notoriously the English Presbyterians who worked out and laid down the principle that nobody should be excluded from church membership for mere difference of doctrine. That was their one peculiarity, by which, from first to last, their nonconformity was known. It has been too much forgotten among ourselves. It was brought to mind and recovered by the action against our chapels by the orthodox, who tried to wrest them out of our hands. Then, for a time, we learned what we had been. But that lesson, I am sorry to say, has been again forgotten, by a generation more intent on the conflicts of opinion, than on the harmonies of religion. Our Nonconformist places of worship have had two centuries of legalised existence. During the first, when they were known as English Presbyterian, and were living under the catholic principle of doctrinal openness, their congregations were at the largest, and had the greatest mixture of persons of different social ranks: their ministers stood more nearly, than at a later time, upon an equality with the clergy of this country; and their laity occupied a corresponding position of relative influence in English society. During the second century, when, under the lead of seceding clergymen and others, zealous chiefly for a reformed Prayer Book and a simplified orthodoxy, a reaction set in from the catholic principle of union to the doctrinal, the internal spiritual life and the external religious weight of our societies sensibly declined. While their intellectual and moral standard was never higher, something in the tone of preaching and of prayer, something in the prevailing type of character produced, was uncongenial to the devout minds, and let them gradually drop away. Nor has the fancied energy of Congregationalism helped us to repair the loss. I do not depreciate the lights which we have gained, the larger knowledge and the keener thought. But can we not call back and blend

with these the pieties once so deep, and the sympathies once so catholic? Let us put an end to the reactionary period, and open the way for their return. It is worthy of your zeal, as heirs of an heroic past, to see that the historic links with it shall not be broken, or its nobler traits be lost. Let us, then, make reparation to the fathers whom we have too much forgotten, by returning to their catholic principles and their church life, and welding once more the broken chain of one of the most honourable periods of English history. It is my fervent prayer that the body of Christian societies, which includes us all, may be guided right by the Spirit of all wisdom, in their decision upon this point. For I am deeply impressed with the conviction, that the future of English religion depends more largely than we can estimate upon the decision to which they may come.

And now may the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus.



## AFTERNOON SESSION.

---

The Afternoon Session, over which Sir JAMES KITSON, Bart., presided, was occupied by a consideration of "The Obstacles to the Advancement of Free Christianity among the People."

The CHAIRMAN, who was applauded on rising, said : Ladies and Gentlemen,— I was advised before entering upon the proceedings of to-day, that I should find it convenient to reserve any observations which I might have to make till after the discussion on the papers which are to be read to you. But I think, judging by the experience of this morning, if I reserve any observations until the close of the discussion, my opportunities as chairman will be very few. But, as your time is precious, I will confine myself to one general observation bearing on the subject of "the obstacles to the advancement of Free Christianity among the people," to a word of congratulation as to the removal of obstacles to the spread of all Christianity amongst the people of this town and this country. This observation has reference to my own experience as having now been for more than thirty years in active association with the great mass of the working population of this town and country. I can bear my testimony to the immense improvement there is in the condition of the people, and express my conviction that it is because the labours of the men who surround me on the platform have tended to infuse the spirit of Christianity into public life, and into efforts to improve by legislation the condition and to advance the opportunities of the people. I believe it is the infusion of these principles of Christianity which has brought this town and this people to the condition in which they now are—a condition, as I say, vastly superior in my experience, in tone, in manners, in thought, to what it was thirty or five and thirty years ago. The legislative action in promoting education in this country has tended distinctly to the removal of obstacles to Free Christianity, and to all Christianity. We, who have been Sunday School teachers in the past, know very well how poor and inferior were the opportunities which we had of teaching our young people. We know that to many the only education they received was the education in the Sunday School. But I was observing the other day a most cheering indication of the improvement in the condition of things by education, in the fact that what many of us prophesied would happen has come to pass, and that is the diminution in the prison population of this country. Instead of maintaining the prison, you are now maintaining the school. The daily average prison population in 1877 in this country was 20,400, and in 1886, notwithstanding the natural increase in the population, the average prison

population had diminished to 15,400. Well, we are glad to know that the minds of the people are opened by the removal of these obstacles to the efforts of those men whom we respect and revere, and who are on our platform to-day.

The Rev. T. W. FRECKELTON then read the following Paper on

### THE OBSTACLES TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF FREE CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE PEOPLE.

THE title of my paper assumes the fact that large masses of our people are estranged from religious communities, and to a large extent from Religion itself. This is not confined to any class, but is most obvious among the lower-middle and artizan people. It does not concern our group of churches more than those called "Evangelical," which do not get these people any more than we, though they have made honest attempts to do so, unless we acknowledge that, theoretically, we ought to recover these lapsed ones, because of special attractions offered to them by our freer faith. We have hitherto made but the smallest efforts in this direction, but so far as we have tried, our success has been at least as great as that of others.

If the knowledge of the disease be half the cure, it is more to the purpose to account for than to describe the state of things we all deplore; but the causes are many and complicated, and could not be traced, unravelled, and classified in a few sentences. I let them pass, except simply to catalogue the more prominent of them, that they may intensify our impression of the evil we have to face. Many of the working people, perhaps not less than two-thirds of the whole number, are feeling very much the social pressure of the time; and are giving whatever interest and energy they can spare from common affairs to real or hypothetical alleviations of their lot, such as Co-operation, Socialism, the management of Trades Unions, and Radical Politics. With respect to all modes of theological expression, public worship, and church organisation and work, they are profoundly and stolidly indifferent, being moved by them, if at all, only to half-amused pity, or to indignant, impatient scorn. In all those things which we class as the greatest religious verities, they are more than sceptical, or if not so, are touched by no strength of conviction, by no earnestness of faith. So far as they have any philosophy, they tend mostly towards a

materialism as irrational as any theology, and hold themselves justified in this by a belief that science substantiates such a conclusion ; not realising that science also has to say its final word in the presence and at the bar of metaphysics and philosophy. They know enough of New Testament Christianity to see that its ideal is a perpetual rebuke to the inconsistency of all the churches, which, by committing themselves to the present interests of the strong as against the weak, and by their presumption of finality as against the progressive instincts of the people, have forfeited the position of light and leading which now they claim for themselves in vain. I do not doubt but thousands of these people are trying to be good, and to do what is right and generous according to their light. I admit the probability that thousands of the unchurched are as truly good as thousands of the churched ; but they are cut off from what ought to be the finest culture, the purest aspiration, the noblest progress, and the grandest witness for human brotherhood and sympathy in all the world, and they will not listen to us, charm we never so wisely. These are the obstacles we have to overcome. They are real and gigantic, and they all spring from, or gravitate around these two points, —the people have lost faith in Evangelical doctrines which have been taught them in Sunday School and Church for over a century ; and we, who could have guided them, have been making ourselves comfortable in snug family chapels and exclusive Sunday clubs, like superior people, and have let things drift. Are we awake now ? We shall see.

The Unitarian and Free Christian Churches are well represented in this Conference. An appeal has been made to them for money to support an attempt to bring Religion before the people, which in twelve weeks has produced the absurd and pitiful sum of £800. ; absurd, when we consider the magnitude of the work to be done ; pitiful, when we look at the wealth and social respectability of the party which has raised it. But we will not pronounce final judgment too soon. It may be that when the "People's Services Committee" shows that it is doing good work, the money will come freely enough.

We stand for a Religion which is rational. We maintain a rationalism which is religious. Whatever differences may characterise

us, this underlies them all, and, more than all things else, differentiates us from other churches ; and, in their judgment, constitutes our heresy. With this attitude, how far do the duty and the possibility lie with us of turning back the tide of popular indifference to Religion ? We say that we can do it, none so well as we ; but hitherto we have not done it,—are not doing it now. Is it within our hope and desire that, out of our deliberations to-day, an impulse may arise, so strong and faithful, so rich in money, in consecrated spirit, and in effort, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it ? I know well that nothing will be done until we are more penetrated and compelled by the spirit of sympathetic love and service which filled the life of Jesus, our Elder Brother, and is the deep soul of his doctrine. We shall not find success by caring first for our own opinions, or our own church, or dazzling ourselves with visions of coming numerical success. We must seek the people for their own sake,—out of a loving pitifulness that their lives are the poorer, and their strength and blessedness the less, for lack of what we enjoy ;—not thinking that God has put the care of their salvation out of His hands into ours ; but eager for the privilege of sharing with our brethren the best helps we have found for our life here, and our hopes for a blessed immortality. If we had this spirit, how small a thing would self-sacrifice seem for such a work, and how strong the compulsion would be to make experiment after experiment until success crowned our persistent faithfulness !

What can we do to this end with our present resources ? We have buildings, Ministers, and organised congregations, with their working machinery. But we have been told that we cannot get the people into our places of worship. If so, is not this the measure of our failure to realise the spirit of Christianity, and so our condemnation ? Our conception of Religion is democratic, or it is not. If it be, then our churches ought to be democratic : if not, our Religion is thereby invalidated, and must give place to something more human and attractive. If our buildings and the uses we made of them fitly represented the spirit and brotherhood of the gospel, what would keep people out of them who wished to be religious at all ? Nothing has shut the doors of our churches upon the people but our exclusiveness and clubism—our want of sympathy and Christian brotherhood, and

the sooner we rise above these the better. I see no hope for solving our problem in plans that will extend class distinctions in the area of Religion ; or make the worship of the poor a matter for the universal patronage of the rich. We cannot make the masses believe in universal brotherhood by herding them into public halls, where home feeling is hard to cherish ; while our places of worship, where comfort, convenience, and the necessary aids exist without extra cost, and where all the associations are reverent and seemly, are often comparatively empty or entirely unused. This does not apply in districts where new ground is being broken ; but there, it would generally be better to put up a chapel at once, place a good Minister in it, and trust in God for results ; having faith in our truth, and in men's native tendency towards Religion. I would counsel, then, that a vigorous attempt be made to use our existing buildings. It surely will not be more difficult to get the people there, than to get them first into a hall, and when they have, from various causes, dwindled down to a very few, transfer them into a chapel, to struggle with a debt—and a badly paid Minister—and have all the work to do over again after the enthusiasm has died down, and people have grown tired of supporting a drooping cause. We cannot get public halls without serious expense, and then special aids to worship have to be supplied, which are but makeshifts compared with what our chapels would furnish. How little our places of worship are used, and the most attractive of them generally the least ! Their cost and maintenance represent a high rental, and yet they are used but some three or four hours a week, and for the rest are shut up to take the dry rot for lack of ventilation, which often spreads from building to people, doing no end of mischief. It is a disgrace that they are so little used. It would be more Christianly to put beds in the pews and lodge the homeless poor, or open the buildings as play-houses for the street children. I doubt not if we used them well and for truly human purposes, the people would come to them on Sunday readily enough. The experience of our mission chapels and rooms which are so used is encouragingly suggestive.

Without severe extra strain, we might do much to educate public opinion on free religious thought. Each church should have its Post

Office Mission, circulating through its district brief, simple literature, which is now very cheap. It is well to distribute fresh, telling excerpts from the utterances of the local Minister; people would thus see the kind of teaching that was within their own reach. Thus the light of the church would shine before men, and not be hidden under a bushel.

I am clear that we are not likely to attract the unchurched people while our services continue as they are. The changes needed will be very great,—many would call them very grave, perhaps revolutionary. We have some experience, gathered from conducting popular services, which ought to help us. Are we prepared to adopt in our churches the methods which succeed in public halls, and to extend them still further? Liturgical forms will prove themselves more and more inadequate. Prayers must be shorter and simpler. Thanksgiving and acknowledgment of dependence on God must be put into our hymns. Our lectionary must be much extended, more catholic, and brought down to date. Our hymns more human; less in the saintly heights which but one person in ten thousand can reach; with less discontent of the present, and less longing for heaven, while it is God's will we should be serving on earth. People like to sing: it is contagious and inspiring when the hymns touch the common experience of life. Give them such hymns, with singable tunes, and they will then welcome and enjoy a good anthem, or organ solo, if worship, and not technical skill be the great aim. The sermons should not be so long as to weary, nor so short as to mean anything or nothing;—above all, not dull, or twaddly, or serio-comic. No gospel according to Punch and Judy will help this time. The talk should be direct, manly, about present-day things, and driven right home to the conscience, as with the hammer of God; human, tender, merciful in judgment, and sympathetic; spoken out of abundant experience, and like a man pleading with his friend. It is an awful mistake to preach down to people, or to patronise men who have sense enough to earn their living, and wit enough to know that evangelical orthodoxy will not serve their turn.

In all large centres of population, there are people who cannot be reached by existing agencies. We have not the men or the money to take the initiative, by at once building a church and settling a Minister.

We must do the best we can : take a public hall, and use such laymen and Ministers as we can get ; and, having gathered an audience, crystallise in it the nucleus of a future church, as soon as possible. Such efforts would be usefully prefaced by putting a lay agent in the district, to visit, to circulate literature, and sow good seed, for three or six months in advance. A good woman would be best for this. The courses of service should not be too short,—through the winter, if possible ; and, if practicable, conducted by the same man : the people then come for worship, and to take what they hear upon its own merits. Variety gives itching ears, fosters a critical spirit, invites comparison, makes the man the measure of truth ; and the people are “one of Paul, another of Apollos, another of Cephas,” and Christ is nowhere. The finest effect of good work,—love for the truth, and reverence for human brotherhood,—is lost.

It goes without saying, that it were best to put such work only into the hands of men of special aptitude. It is not the work of a Pastor, or of a Missionary ; but of a Preacher, with popular power, popular sympathy, contagious enthusiasm, attractive manners, unbounded tact, and a love of truth that counts sacrifice for it a joy. Where are such men ? I know only that God makes all sorts and conditions of men, and this kind with the rest. They are not numerous, but there are surely such amongst us as have this treasure, though it be in earthen vessels, and whose sufficiency would be of God ; and, we may hope, that if called to this work, would not too nicely count the cost, or too long confer with flesh and blood. We ought to have not less than six such men at work in Great Britain, to be soon raised to ten or twelve. And we ought to have a Church Building Fund, to provide homes for such communities as would be organised.

Should it be, as I have assumed, our direct aim either to gather the people into our existing churches, or to organise them into churches in new localities ; or shall we work sporadically, without any afterthought, leaving them to drift until we choose to work again ? In the latter course some good would be done ; interest awakened ; seed sown ; light and helpfulness put into many struggling lives ; and a few so far influenced as to seek out fellowship with kindred souls. But we surely want to do more than this,—to make the people more religious all the

year round, and through the whole texture of their lives. Religion, moreover, is, in part, life consecrated to the service of humanity, and there is no school for this like a church where fellowship and brotherhood go hand in hand ; where the interest is common ; and all means and motives to good work are economised by unity of effort. Again, if we really help these people, we do not make them more fit to fall into orthodox methods of thought and church usage, or make the "Evangelical Churches" present to them greater attractions than before ; but the contrary. And we wrong them if we leave them again to drift, or take refuge where their sympathy is not complete, swelling the torrent of insincerity and pitiful trimming which is but too prevalent. Wherever we can we ought to aim at establishing new centres of influence. Where there is little promise of this we ought not to waste money and work. True ! when we sow good seed we never know whether this or that shall prosper, and there is a sense in which we should "sow by all waters" in faith and hope ; but not for dry and arid wastes does the good husbandman leave the inviting field, to scatter seed wherever it may chance.

I fully admit that in going to the people we should not be harshly aggressive in any sectarian way ; or waste our strength in negative work that is already done to our hand. Those who would come to hear us are already beyond that. Nor is it worth while to be setting Bible texts in controversial order on this or that subject. We have to appeal to the Soul. The more positive our teachings are the better. The more hopeful and encouraging our worship, the more good we shall do. But we must not be colourless, or content to keep the ground that is common to us and orthodox churches. We ought to boldly shift the sanctions of Religion from all grounds of outward authority to the Soul itself ; and the more simply, courageously, and openly we do this the better. Nothing is to be gained by hiding our differences with the traditional theology. We can well hold our own, while we recognise that below all our differences we have common cause with all who are striving to serve God in the loving service of man.

Of money, Sirs, suffer this word :—There is no lack of it amongst us ;—"the readiness is all!" Whether we have little or much,

there is only one worthy thing to do with it,—to serve God, by helping man. To the extent of our means, we are the stewards of God. And a man had better look after his stewardship while he lives, than leave some one to do it after he is dead. A man should “serve his own generation according to the will of God,” before he fall asleep.

I have now said my word,—regretful that it should have been so tentative and discursive. I am not anxious that you should agree with me; but I desire that our subject, “set in the light of many minds,” should make the will of God clearer to us;—and may He, the Father of all the generations of men, the Inspirer of duty, the Helper in all good work, the Guide of the faithful, and the Giver of all success, so rule our hearts in His way, that we may desire only His will, and seek only to do it!

---

The Chairman then called upon Mr. JOHN DENDY, Junr., to read a second Paper on the same subject, which he did, as follows:—

FREE Christianity appears to be broadly divisible into two kinds; the one, that of the churches which seem to be really free; the other, that professed by men, the expressed or implied conditions of whose positions appear to be inconsistent with their teaching. Of the latter I do not wish to say much. We talk a good deal about the liberalising tendency of thought in other churches. It seems to afford a much-needed excuse for lack of energy in our own. So far however as regards the laity in orthodox churches, I greatly doubt whether it is those whose interest in religion is most keen who are most affected by this tendency. There seems to be one great obstacle to the beneficent spread of this form of Free Christianity. It seems to involve too many ambiguous positions; apparent contradictions which have to be reconciled by explanations difficult to plain men; readings of new meanings into ancient creeds and phrases which have acquired with the people a significance not easily to be changed. A kind of Free Christianity may for a time flourish upon these terms, especially among those who are ever anxious to tell and to hear some new thing; but will it not be at the expense of that simplicity and integrity of

thought and word which are essential to a true Christianity, and the lack of which is an enormous stumbling block in the way of many of the people who begin to look into these matters for themselves? The new wine demands new bottles. It is for us to see that they are provided, and not to rest content with watching the process of filling the old ones and waiting to see them burst. If I may put it somewhat vulgarly, a scientific interest in other people's explosions, however friendly and sympathetic, is not an adequate substitute for getting up steam on our own account. More missionary zeal on our part is certainly one thing necessary to a wider spreading of a genuine Free Christianity.

Turning to the former kind of Free Christianity, I take the name as a convenient general description of that type of religious belief characteristic of the churches which are represented here to-day, and I wish to consider a few obstacles to its progress which appear to be due to ourselves, rather than those which arise from the stupidity or prejudice of others, or from a general indifference to religion in any form.

One of our great difficulties is this:—We do not appeal to the fears of men in the same way that good orthodox folk can. We cannot say, as a worthy curate once did to me, when I pressed him upon the question of my own chances of salvation as being an Unitarian,—“Some will be beaten with many stripes, and some with few, according to the opportunities each has had of knowing better; but some stripes you will certainly get.” And, I must admit, he did not fail to give me excellent opportunities. From a merely proselytizing point of view, this is a real obstacle in our path. Do we meet this difficulty as we might by a legitimate appeal to similar feelings; by an energetic preaching of the true doctrine of retribution for real sin? The business and social world is full of corruption which needs to be denounced with a prophetic vigour. Why should not that prophet's task be especially ours? Who are so free to undertake it? Would not good men,—and there are plenty such practically outside all churches,—gather round a church of which it was a special characteristic that it fearlessly and persistently denounced and exposed all forms of wickedness and folly? We have a kind of reputation of being a

decently but coldly moral people. Why should we not have the higher reputation of being *the* church which, above all others, practically fights with sin ?

In the next place take this phrase "Free Christianity." Have we not to a considerable extent inverted the order of precedence between the two ideas which it embodies? Naturally Christianity would be the leading idea, to be prominently and principally insisted upon; the cardinal matter; Freedom, in this connection, but a secondary or qualifying idea. Now I think I have not seldom heard it stated that our freedom is the cardinal point of our position. No doubt the Christianity is taken for granted, but it is left too much in that dubious position, and the idea of freedom is so dwelt upon that not a few of our own young people end in freeing themselves from Religion altogether. If the average toil-worn man of the people, struggling with sin and difficulty through a weary life, could speak to you the dimly-felt need of his soul, would he not tell you that it was rather to place himself in holy bondage to a higher, purer, nobler than himself, than to be endowed with a greater liberty? I suggest, then, that another obstacle is, that we dwell too much on our liberty, too little on our Christianity, to meet the wants of the people. Moreover, dwelling so much on the idea of freedom, we are led into eccentricities of individuality which are a source of weakness and prejudice. Anything more than a nominal union becomes almost impossible, and in consequence we present to the world, not a strong and dignified church, but a cluster of loosely connected congregations, whose only bond seems to be a principle which tends to separation. Men are not thus attracted. They love rather to join themselves to societies which appear strong and united, and therefore capable of greater things than are possible to us.

Now, as to this freedom,—is it, as we conceive of, and practise it, a complete all-round freedom? I venture to think that our conception is too much limited to the ideas of intellectual freedom, and freedom from civil and ecclesiastical control; and that our own little public opinion leaves us in many ways far from free.

The Religious life consists surely not so much in correct thinking, as in strong, true feeling, and loving; and, with most men, these must

have scope for expression, if they are to live. Now, the manifestation of emotion in any form is not fashionable among us. Public opinion in our churches would not have encouraged the Magdalen to lavish her tears and precious ointment before quite so many people. We are too respectable to have many "miserable sinners" amongst us. An enemy might almost call some of us genteel. If we have strong feelings of love and reverence, we, as a rule, hold it decent not to give them much expression. Our standard of taste is high, and it is well that it should be so; but it is not well that an offence against it should be regarded as more important than a total lack of zeal,—nor that it should put us out of sympathy with good and earnest people who do not quite come up to it. We have earned a reputation for coldness, and the world needs warmth. To preach intellectually over the heads of the people, is a well-recognised mistake, sometimes committed, I am told, even in our pulpits! A less recognised, but equally grave one, is to preach a Christianity so refined and unsubstantial as to be out of the range of earnest but untutored hearts.

Again, are we not somewhat unduly hampered by tradition in such matters as the form and occasion of our services, and the use we make of our churches? These may be minor matters; but we cannot afford to neglect them. The Christianity which will ultimately redeem the world will not draw so sharp a distinction as even we still do between the things which belong to the first, and those which belong to the remaining six days of the week. For instance, its services will not be regarded as the most convenient occasion for airing the Christian's new clothes. We shall not get our churches crowded with those whose spiritual needs are as great as their garments are poor, so long as we make a practice of enforcing the painful contrast between their lot and ours in this kind of way. It is said that the masses are ready to receive our Gospel gladly, but will not come to our churches, and, therefore, we must go out to other buildings. It seems to me that it would be more to the purpose that we should so modify our services, and our habits, as that they might feel at home with us.

Are we quite free in our application of the great doctrine of Christian brotherhood? It should be especially ours. What I wish

to suggest to you is this, that if one amongst us should try to make some more earnest and practical application than is usual of that doctrine to the daily life of men, he would be quite as likely to be looked at askance, and opprobriously termed Communist or Socialist, as in any other community ; also, that amongst us there is pretty nearly as much of what is objectionable and unnecessary in class distinctions as elsewhere. I am not fond of such terms as "Sunday School Element," "Working-class Congregation"—they seem to emphasise distinctions in an undesirable way. We need more opportunity for character to make its mark, independently of wealth or mere external refinement. The masses who are to fill our churches and help to bear our burdens must be sympathetically received to a fair share in the management. If their voices are not heard in our councils, they will be heard elsewhere.

In suggesting to you another obstacle, I am reminded of a passage in Mr. Tayler's "Religious Life in England," doubtless familiar to many here, wherein, after dwelling upon the necessity for most minds of "an object externally presented to raise and quicken their spiritual aspirations, to fix and realize their dim and fluctuating sense of human communion with God,"—he, in sentences of great power and beauty, insists upon the sufficiency and fitness of Christ as such an object. He proceeds to point out that Deism makes no provision for this elementary want of our nature. The doubt I would suggest is, whether much of the modern Unitarian teaching makes sufficient provision of this kind. Doubtless there are amongst us strong souls who do not feel this want, who, as it were, are able to bear the burden of standing alone with the Almighty. But most of us, I am persuaded, need the support of a friend in that awful presence ; the touch of a guiding hand as we grope our uncertain way towards the other shore ; some one who shall embody and realise for us that love of God which we are assured bridges over the stupendous gulf that seems to separate us from Him.

In religious, as in other matters, most men need and will gather round a leader whose just authority they feel, and whom they can regard with love and reverence. Could we not, without infringing upon our just freedom, cultivate more loyalty to the Master—restore to a more prominent place in our thought and teachings, Jesus, the

great leader and helper of mankind, placing him before the people not only as a remote founder of our faith, but as a real head of our Church, who, though absent in the flesh, yet speaketh with a loving authority to his fellow men to-day.

I hardly know how to put my next point. What is the basis of church life: the reason—expressed or implied—given to men why they should join a church? Is it not too often personal salvation? In the case of a church where some particular form of belief is held to be all important, this is almost necessarily the case. Hence a certain taint of selfishness, which has in many minds become associated with Christianity, and is not the least among the causes which are alienating good men to-day. Have we sufficiently realised that it is open to us to hold out a nobler inducement? Men are perhaps less inclined to believe that they can in any way be themselves helped or saved by the influences or services of a church, but they are not less inclined to help in practical work for saving others. The Sunday school and its many developments are, of course, to some extent a practical recognition of this, and I have known of men who could hardly be got to attend church services who would yet take part in school work. But there is too much severance between church life and school life, and the school does not afford opportunities suitable to all capacities. In the true church, surely, practical co-operation in the promotion of the kingdom of God should hold at least an equal place with the worship of God and the pursuit of our own personal betterment. If we could offer to the world a Church, membership in which meant primarily partnership in the work of Christ, I believe we should not only retain many whom we may now lose, but make large gains. Not long ago a man well known for the time and ability he unselfishly devotes to public work, said to me, "I am not a religious man;" and within five minutes he declared that, in his opinion, Jesus was the greatest reformer the world had ever known, and that his teachings went really to the root of the matter. Why should men find themselves out of sympathy with Church life, when they earnestly believe in visiting the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and keeping themselves unspotted from the world. In religious life, as it is the highest, so it is with most of us necessarily the slowest develop-

ment of our nature. It is childish to find fault with young men who honestly tell you that they do not feel this religious life. Few of us in early years do, except at rare intervals and in small degree. It would be more to the purpose so to organise the church, on its practical side, as to retain their sympathy and co-operation, until experience and association with those who have gained some insight into the deep things of faith, shall lead them from work to worship, and from fellowship with man to communion with God. So, at least, our churches might not be robbed of their natural increase.

I want, with all respect, to say a word with regard to the presentation of our case from the pulpit. Much must depend on that. Many solutions are offered of the complicated social problems which beset us. In the end, I believe a chief one will be found in the vigorous and simple application of Christian principles to daily life. The teachers who gain most attention are those who speak with confidence, who have made up their minds to something and teach it, as having authority; not those who air their doubts and difficulties in public, balancing probabilities and leaving you uncertain where they are. I venture to think that we sometimes get from the pulpit too much discussion and speculation. A Free Christianity need not be a loose and uncertain Christianity. I would not have any man speak with a confidence which he does not feel; but I do not think the pulpit is the place for arguing out his own difficulties so much as for emphatic teaching of that—be it ever so little,—which the preacher really believes. And the preacher should be acquainted not only with the constitution of the human mind according to the most approved authorities, and the historic infirmities of mankind as studied within the four walls of his College, but he should also know something of the temptations and difficulties which will beset his people, rich or poor, on the Monday, and how to apply Christian principles to meet them.

In conclusion, let me say that, if I have not dwelt upon the vast amount of prejudice and misunderstanding which we have to encounter, it is not because I underrate its magnitude or importance as a factor in the problem we are discussing to-day. It is because I believe it will be best overcome by such a development of our activities, and enlargement of our sympathies, as will convert us from a

school of opinion into a living, working, beneficent branch of the Christian Church, before whose felt influences for good prejudice and misunderstanding will melt away. I believe that the first step towards such a development is carefully to consider whether there is not a more ample field for our reforming energies at home, and a better claim upon our charity abroad, than we have hitherto realised. If we want to win the people, and I speak not of the so-called working classes only, we must learn how, without abandoning anything that is truly good and lofty in our present ideals, to go part way to meet them ; we must strive not only to make them understand us, but to understand them better ourselves, and to enter into a fuller sympathy with all that is good and earnest, however foreign to our accustomed ways, in their thoughts and lives.

---

Mrs. LOUISA HERFORD (Leeds), opening the discussion, said :—Mr. Chairman and Friends,—I think we ought to learn much from what these experienced men are telling us to-day, I will just make a few remarks on the two papers. Mr. Dendy speaks of the fault that lies in us. He thinks that we lay too much stress upon freedom, upon our freedom, and not upon the Christianity that we should practise ; and the consequence is that the young people are freeing themselves from religion altogether, and we lose the sympathy and help of those whom we love best. As an educator of youth, this seems to me a most important point. Who is here that has not heard some very liberal-minded parents say, “ We will not influence our children’s religious opinions ; we will allow them to judge for themselves when they are old enough to do so.” Is that the line they follow in trying to develop the capacities of their children, their intellectual powers, or even their outward manners ? Do they not try, when they want their capabilities to be brought out, to do all they can to help them ? They get the best books and the best teachers, and are rejoiced by and take the greatest sympathy in their children’s progress. Then why leave the best of all gifts to lie fallow until they are grown up ? The spiritual life within determines so much of our work, of our happiness, of our well-being in life, that it should be the first care of parents to nourish and bring forward that spiritual nature which is implanted in us. How difficult ; but then life is not given us to be easy. Life is difficult, and surely for us Christians—I myself prefer the word Christians even to Free Christians—for us Christians who are trying to learn the Christianity of Jesus, it is surely easier for us to lead our children to the loving Father, and to the loving Elder Brother and Master, than for those who have the mythological excrescences of salvation by blood, and many other wonderful additions to that which Jesus taught us.

Mr. Dendy truly says that the need of the soul is to be in bondage to something higher, purer, nobler than ourselves. And I think that parents cannot begin too early to teach their children that yoke which is easy, and to give them that teaching which will help to make the world happier around us and them. Then both papers are very strong in the point that, unless we are penetrated and compelled by the loving sympathy of Jesus, we can do but little, or as one paper puts it, "In the true Church, practical co-operation in the promotion of the kingdom of God should hold at least an equal place with the worship of God." And then the first paper goes on to say, "Cannot we make better use of our churches and our church buildings?" There they are, beautiful, and yet open for a few hours only. All you who are strangers here in Leeds, will forgive me if I refer only to our beautiful chapel—Mill Hill Chapel, which is best known to me. Take that chapel yard for instance. When I pass on the week-day it is locked up. It looks dreary and forsaken. Could not that be made some use of by people who have not gardens, and no seats in gardens to rest in? Would it be a desecration to these spots that are so sacred to us to know that weary people and dear children are sitting there, and enjoying the grass and the trees that might be planted there? I think much might be done to make them love that spot, and if they were to love it who knows but on a Sunday they might wander into the church, and hear some of the blessed truths taught from the pulpit? Then we have a play-ground in connection with the school, which I believe is never used on a Saturday. Could that play-ground not be thrown open to children who have no play-ground and no nursery, who have not even streets, some of them, to play in, but little yards and back slums? I think we might even make the play-ground interesting by swings—much might be done to make it attractive. It should be under supervision, and surely supervision could be found if we will find the money. Then there is our beautiful congregational hall. I think we could make sitting and reading rooms for some of the people who have no such thing. And when Mr. Freckleton goes on to speak about lay agents all over England—these lay agents increased to 12, I should go on and say let us try lay agents here in our town, to visit the sick and those who are in trouble, and bring them to the reading-room and sociable gatherings. With the co-operation of members of our chapel surely something could be done to make a sociable, helpful centre to our chapel. I think it would be useful to employ women as lay agents. The qualities that Mr. Freckleton considers most necessary are sympathy, contagious enthusiasm, attractive manner (which I hope some women have), unbounded tact, and the love of truth. As an educator of girls, I say the love of truth is as innate in girls as it is in boys. If these women can be employed to visit, and to bring some of our hard-working brothers and sisters to value sociable life in connection with our Congregational Hall, surely they would begin to love the place, and would come to help to worship with us. In fact, I believe that our churches ought to be made more into a sort of Charity Organisation Society, where we could help those out of work, and we

could know them and do for them what parents are doing for their children. Much might be said about pauperising people ; but the love that goes out to meet them does not pauperise them. It is money that is given without knowing to whom you give it ; and as for paupers, are we not most of us paupers ? Am I not dependent entirely on the work of others ? There is not a meal that I eat, not a garment that I put on, that is not the work of the faithful creatures around me ; and I think the sooner we recognise and feel grateful to men and women who are working conscientiously for us, and recognise them as our brothers and sisters, to whom we owe quite as much as they owe to us, the sooner shall we be Christians. In our congregation we have many good men and women—angels I may say—who do useful work. We have men and women who provide cheap dinners, others who look after the children who want holidays in the country, women who look after homeless girls and try to make their lives and their difficulties a little more easy for them, men and women who open their gardens to those who have no gardens, and give tea parties, and treat them with as much kindness and respect as if they were their rich friends. We have many true Christians, but what we want is to league more together and do it more from the centre, not for our own edification, but because of the great spiritual truths that our church can teach them. If we could socially develop our churches I do believe we should work together more usefully. We have been accused by both papers of being exclusive, and of favouring class distinctions. Now I do not hold with that. I think we are all of us shy, and it requires great courage to go out and seek others, and for others to come and seek us. The more we could meet the less exclusive we should be. Mr. Freckleton speaks about the services in our churches. Now I want to know, is it the inevitable doom of all worshippers that they must hear a sermon, whether they like it or not ? They are often very good, and we enjoy them sometimes. But I have great sympathy with active-bodied people who cannot sit still for more than an hour, for so fatiguing an effort of the mind as worship should be. And then when the morning service is over, is it wise to tack on, as we do, the best of all services, the Communion ? Could not the minister and congregation be saved the sermon on that day ? Could it not be made a part of the service ? And could not those who do not wish to partake either remain as listeners, or leave the church ? Then on a Sunday morning about ten days ago, at our Mill Hill Chapel, we are told we had a most beautiful service. The grandchild of one of our beloved ministers was received into the church, and the service was so touching and beautiful that it would have done us all good to have listened to it. Why, when occasion offers, should not such a service take the place of a sermon ? If Mr. Dendy is right in saying that “ religion does not consist so much in correct thinking as in noble and deep feeling,” surely nothing would affect us so much as receiving these dear fresh young spirits, and knowing that the parents are here promising that they will do their best to bring their child up to the love of God and of Jesus. I thank you for hearing me.

Mr. T. CHATFIELD CLARKE (London) said :—Sir James Kitson, Ladies and Gentlemen :—I think, as a member of the Conference Committee, we may congratulate ourselves, and I think you will say the Committee have done right in asking men like Mr. Freckleton and Mr. Dendy to read such excellent papers as they have done to-day; and further, I think we must congratulate ourselves that Mrs. Herford has given us so touching an address as she has. In the very few words I shall say to this audience I will express, firstly, the feeling I have with regard to Mr. Freckleton's paper, and that is that I think in the main he runs on the right road all the way through. Mr. Freckleton takes this position—utilise your churches and chapels to the full; but if you cannot do so, go out to the public halls, and do what you can to bring in the people to acknowledge the service of Christianity. On the other hand as I understand the excellent paper of Mr. Dendy, it is rather advice to ourselves how to deal more or less with many of the deficiencies which have crept into our communion, and to enable ourselves to deal more freely, more spiritually, and more powerfully with the great masses of the people. Now, I venture to say to this audience that my very strong conviction is, that unless the Unitarian Denomination, as a church, take some fresh departure by gaining to themselves the support of those intelligent masses of the people which gained so much from the Education Act, and the general progress of literature during the last few years—unless we do that I see [little] hope for sustaining the church at all. You must remember there are large forces of society against us. The Church of England has gained, and from what I know is gaining ground very considerably, in large sections of society and in our great towns. She has taken within the last 30 or 40 years an entirely new step, which every honest, right-thinking, God-fearing man must rejoice at. She is now doing her work among the people of this country, but of course she does it under those Ecclesiastical limitations with which I take it many of us here to-day have not the slightest sympathy. On the other hand, the orthodox bodies, supported as they are generously and manfully by men like the late Mr. Samuel Morley, and Mr. Hudson, and others; supported I will say with a generosity unknown among the Unitarian connection; supported by immense sums of money for mission halls, and special services and agencies of every kind,—I say under these circumstances they have worked and are working, whilst we, claiming as we do, and I suppose every one does here to-day, a faith which they value and cherish, have laboured at a disadvantage, because our leaders have fallen short of giving these very necessary means of help. I would say with regard to the movement which has been taking place lately in special services for the people, that there is a uniform wish, on our part, that these services should strengthen existing agencies. But I believe there must be many a Unitarian minister here to-day, who, looking at the isolated position in which he stands in a country town, will welcome an outside effort which is to be a local effort, started by the local people, carried out by local power, and only aided by the central body in the matter of funds and the necessary counsel that may be desired. For my part,

I must honestly express the conviction that unless we do earnestly enter into a strong missionary effort throughout the country on a considerable and large scale, in the large towns of our country we shall fail to gain the power with the people that we so much desire to gain. I must mention to-day a little incident which I confess had a strong influence on my mind. I was giving a lecture in London the other night upon the progress of the last fifty years. The latter part of my lecture took up the question of religious freedom—the views we have had enunciated to-day. I spoke on Liberal Christianity, and of what I believe should be its power among the people. I was speaking to a considerable audience of working men. Instead of attaching themselves in the discussion afterwards to any other single point, they all dealt with this one point of my address. They said, "We have never had such views as you have put before us presented to us before." Their attitude was one of sympathy ; and I am speaking the conviction of my mind when I say that we shall find, I believe, in large classes of the operatives of this country sympathetic audiences if we will go out to them. Now comes the point, will they come to us ? My belief is that under the constitution of our churches and chapels, even with some modification at the present time, you would not get them into them, and therefore it is that I would counsel most earnestly the support of the movement we have at heart. I would say, do not let it be supposed that any attempt would be made in the slightest degree to trench upon the proper liberty or duty or sphere of any local minister. I should be sorry to feel that there was any jealousy or feeling on the part of one man or another ; because you must recollect that the preaching to the working classes is often a question of special fitness, and it may be necessary, and I think it will be necessary, when we extend this movement throughout various parts of the country, at times to ask men to stand aside for a moment and let those take the duty who are specially fitted for it. But however that may be, the question is—do you here to-day as an audience feel that you have a great missionary work to perform throughout the country ? Do you feel that you have great truths to present to the great masses of the working classes of this country ? Do you feel you are prepared with the men, and can give the devotion, the zeal, the labour, and the self-sacrifice necessary for that work ? And do you here feel, the richer men among us, that they will come forward in a more ample way to support us with these means which are necessary to carry out such work ? I therefore make my appeal to you on very broad grounds, not on the ground of a great internal movement with regard to our churches and chapels, but I should like to present ourselves, as a denomination, catholic in our views, spiritual in our faith, liberal in all our sentiments, that we should come forward before society as a whole in this country, and take our part and endeavour to commence in our great towns and cities a work that is vital and necessary to the great masses of the people. I suppose there is no man here to-day who does not know that Secularism and Agnosticism are more or less spreading among many classes of society ; and if you value the truths we are here to-day representing, if you desire

to see these truths brought home to the working classes, I know of no other means so effectual as these I advocate, and I should have no hope for the future of the church with which I am connected, unless that church shows a considerable amount of missionary effort in the future—missionary effort devoted to the highest aims and yet working in the freest spirit and with catholicity. I have only now to express a hope that our meeting here may strengthen all these good objects, and that the blessing of God may rest upon this great question we are now considering.

Mr. C. W. JONES (Liverpool) said : Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—I came into this room with great curiosity, because I wanted to know what were “the obstacles to the advance of Free Christianity among the people.” I knew of only one, and I have heard of no other since I came into this room. Every obstacle mentioned is purely imaginary. The only obstacle I know of is, that we don’t care to do it. And when I say “we,” I limit the word entirely to the laymen of our churches. We have plenty of ministers who are willing to do it. Our laity have plenty of money to supply the means, and it only remains with them to give those ministers the opportunity of preaching the gospel of Christ to the people, and it would be done. There was a fatal mistake, it seemed to me, running through both the papers which have been read. The title of the papers ought to have been, “The Obstacles in the way of drawing the People into our Chapels.” I do not wish to speak against congregational work. No one thinks more of it than I do. Nor do I wish to speak against missionary effort, for no one thinks more of it than I do. But there is a class, and an immense class, which can only be reached in an entirely different way. You cannot get at them by means of your congregational or missionary work, and unless you be content simply to *preach* the gospel of Christ to them, and let them go their own way just as they like afterwards, you will leave this enormous mass untouched. Therefore, I have the greatest dread of anybody who speaks of work of this sort strengthening our existing organisations. Let us go into it, purely and simply, as a matter of preaching Christianity to the people, and they will listen to us ; and let us trust in God as to the issue. It is not of the slightest use, as the writer of the first Paper said, to put a chapel, with a good minister, in a populous place, and trust in God for the rest. We have something else to do. We must learn by experience. We have tried over and over again, and the difficulty is not in the least that we cannot find good ministers. We have had excellent ministers, and they have done excellent work, but they have not succeeded. The people will not come to us, and unless we go to them we shall not have an opportunity of preaching to them. The best places to find the people are the places they frequent most ; and I do not object in the least to teach those people that even when they are at the theatre, or their smoking concerts, they are in a place where God dwells. I do not think it in the least wrong to go to the lowest music hall, the lowest theatre you can find, and preach Christ to men who have been spending their time there during the week. If you built a hall, you would not get the people in unless you used it for the purposes

those other places are used for during the week. We are at present trying to find a suitable site in Liverpool, on which to build a hall capable of holding 1,500 to 2,000 people. The site is the only difficulty; when that is found, the necessary money will be forthcoming; but when we have got our hall, we shall make a point of using it during the week as a theatre, for concerts, for political meetings, &c., so that the people will feel that on Sundays they are going to a place they are used to, and not a building dedicated to any particular purpose. By all means, pursue congregational and missionary work with all your hearts; but unless you make this form of preaching the gospel an entirely distinct work, you will never make it a success.

The Rev. ALFRED HOOD (Brighton) said:—In the excellent papers we have heard read, it seems to be assumed that people will more readily listen to our simple message than to the dogmatic and metaphysical doctrines of the churches. But must we not take facts as they are, and look them straight in the face? Do the people come to us as they go to others? And if not, what is the reason? I was talking, some time since, to a novelist, and I said, “I have got a story for you.” And after I had narrated my story, he said, “Oh, that is only an atmosphere, it has no plot; and the publishers want a plot, for the people demand it.” Well, I thought over that in relation to our message and the message of the popular churches, and it struck me that therein lies the difference between the popular faith and the Christianity we call free. Look at the plot the popular churches place before the people. Man was made perfect, and placed in Paradise to till the soil, was tempted, fell, and was expelled. Without a ray of hope he awaits the sentence of death, when, lo! the Eternal Son of Infinite Love stays the vengeance of offended Deity, and promises to redeem with His own life's blood, erring and guilty man. Then the plot thickens. Through the ages, all the forms and ceremonies instituted and upheld by the priests, we are told, are but types and emblems of the great work fulfilled by Christ. In the fulness of time God sends His only Son to die for sinful man, and the plot culminates in the sacrifice on Calvary. I say, distinctly, there is a plot that appeals to the popular imagination; and I ask you what have we got to put in its place before our fellowmen? Well, you say, we have got Free Christianity. Yes; and I believe in my hearts of hearts there never was a message more glorious than that message of Free Christianity; a message that is summed up in one word—love; in love to God, and in love to man. How is it then, I ask, when we have so simple and so glorious a message as this, that none the less the people don't come to us? Only a short time since, I heard of a man who was educated as a Christian minister—a man, therefore, of intelligence and culture—but who had greater facility for business than for preaching, and he left preaching and went into business. And not long since, he came to the office of a friend of mine, and, speaking of our Free Christianity, exclaimed, “It won't do!” repeating this until his voice rose to a shout. There was no argument, but simply “It won't do!” “The fact of the matter is this,”

he said, "You know, as business men (he was now no longer a minister) we have to do very many things that are not quite what they might be. What an awful thing it would be if a man had to bear his own sins ; how very necessary it is that we should have some scheme of salvation by which we can lay our sins on the shoulders of another." I say distinctly, there lies a difficulty which we have to meet. And our first step, if we would commend our faith to the people, is to say what Free Christianity is. We must show, in simple language, that it is Christianity free from those priestly elements, which were discarded by Jesus, and from those Pagan elements which were introduced into the early church by Gentile converts. The central thought of Jesus was that God's kingdom is here and now, that God's Spirit, a Spirit of holiness, truth, and love, surrounds His children, ready to fill them with truth and love and holiness. This message of the Prophets, simplified and purified by Jesus, we must so place before the people that they may be weaned from all lower conceptions of Christianity, and won over to the religion of Christ.

Miss EDITH LUPTON (Bradford) said :—I am exceedingly interested in Mrs. Herford's remarks, and the point of view she took up as to the spread of Free Christian views among the community. The neglect of Unitarians for the education of the young is the great blot of the whole system, and the great cause of failure, and increasing failure. What should we think of the ranger in the forest, who never prided himself on the grand and beautiful trees he saw growing around him ? This is exactly what the Unitarian body is doing, in closing all its day schools. I scarcely know of any which the body has not closed, having handed over the care of their children to the nation. That, I think, is the greatest possible mistake. The early Unitarians separated themselves from the church, and were contented to deny themselves worldly promotion, and to live sparingly, that they might be true to their intellectual convictions. We are now sending our children to schools where orthodox religion is taught, for in almost every Board school throughout the country, orthodox doctrines are being taught, and taught without any religious enthusiasm, without any religious glow, in the coarsest manner, and with a want of any religious feeling on the part of the children. I consider we are acting in an entirely false way. Unitarianism has no future before it, if we still persist in neglecting the care of the children. As for the manner in which this so-called religious education is carried on, its severity is something incredible. I remember speaking to a little boy once, who was weeping bitterly because he had been punished. I asked him what he had been beaten for. "Please, ma'am," he replied, "because I could not tell how many apostles are in the Bible." Well, seeing how many people go down to their graves who cherish the belief that Paul was one of the apostles, I don't think the little fellow's error was very heinous after all. I do not say that we should teach Unitarian beliefs—perhaps it would be heresy to say Unitarian want of belief—but I think we ought to bring our children in and teach them good morality. We are bound to try and

give our faith to the children who are growing up. If our faith, or absence of faith, is such that we do not care to communicate it to the rising generation, it is worth nothing. We shall carry the seeds of decay with us, if we do not bestir ourselves and take care of the children.

Mr. I. M. WADE (London) said :—In common with a good many others in this Hall, I have been regretting, almost deplored, the utter absence from our programme of any reference to the Sunday School, which, I suppose, is now generally considered to be a vital branch of the Christian Church, Free Church, Free Christian Church, Unitarian Church, and Non-subscribing Church, all of which names we have had mentioned to-day. I have been into a good many of these churches, but could never discover what fundamental difference there is between them. I think none of my friends, certainly not many, have now any cause to regret the absence I have just referred to. The ladies have spoken, and they, at least, are not likely to forget the young people connected with our Sunday Schools or Churches. The cause of the children is safe in their hands, when church organisation has to be considered. It would be quite impossible for anybody to have stated with more emphasis, more exact observation, or more eloquent feeling, the case of the schools, considered as means for building up and promoting church life. There, if we are wise, lies the best portion of our work. We have already got between thirty and forty thousand elder scholars and children under our care, taught by between three and four thousand teachers. Out of over two hundred schools, innumerable other useful institutions have sprung, all of them, more or less, tending to promote the best interests of our churches and the spread of rational Christianity. We have been deplored over and over again in the papers, and in speeches innumerable, the want of success our theological views make among the masses,—we have been talking for years about the purity and simplicity of our faith, and are always consulting about the way in which we should preach to the people; but we had no word in this great meeting until the ladies got up to speak as to how we were to train the rising generation to become an active part of our Christian Church in days to come. Miss Edith Lupton has referred to the teaching in the elementary schools during the week. She says very truly that the Scriptures are being read in these schools, and laments that the children are taught what is generally called the orthodox faith. But how can this be helped? How are those teachers, who have never come under the influence of your Unitarian Churches, to teach anything else but what they themselves have been taught? The thing must go on for a time, whilst the law stands as it does. What is the real remedy? Why, apply yourselves more heartily to the work of your Sunday schools. Make the child the unit—the protoplasmic germ, if you will—of your church. I have known several instances where a teacher has opened a room, has got together one or two children, and from that beginning a school has been formed, then a church has been opened, and in a very few years a flourishing congregation has been the result. Is not that, then, a vital portion of

your very work? Can you possibly find anything more practical to do? The dew-drop, it is said, will reflect the universe. Christ took a little infant in his arms, and saw in it "the kingdom of heaven." The child is father of the man. Get at your children. Out of the child infinite possibilities may come. Let us only be as faithful in doing the work of Christ as in ceaselessly talking about it, and abundant success will follow, never doubt it.

Mr. HENRY BLESSLEY (Portsmouth) said:—Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—We have an old chapel at Portsmouth, but we cannot get the masses to look at it. They pass by to hear the military bands, but they scarcely look at the old Unitarian Chapel, let alone go into it. Under the auspices of the British and Foreign Association, we have taken a music hall, and we have arranged services there on the lines laid down by the Association. We have shrubs and plants laid along the footlights of the hall. We have a company of lady vocalists, and we have succeeded in gathering in the blue-jackets—the sailors, and the soldiers, and the coast workers, and although we have had to put up with the cracking of nuts, and with loud expressions of applause, one of our ladies, who said she would not go near the place, was there last Sunday, and sang "The Better Land." She sang it softly, and she had the hearts of the nut-crackers, and the souls of the sailors. The "obstacles" are chiefly of our own making. The ladies who, at Portsmouth, said they would not go to the place, and afterwards came, are specimens of the ladies I see before me. There are many ladies here who can and do sing in their own homes of "The Better Land." If they will meet the masses, and sing to them, "The Better Land" will come.

The Conference then adjourned until Thursday morning.



# CONVERSAZIONE,

TOWN HALL, WEDNESDAY EVENING.

---

In the evening a Conversazione was held in the Town Hall. The Victoria Hall was tastefully decorated with flowers and plants. The grand organ was played at intervals by Mr. A. F. Briggs, organist of Mill Hill Chapel, and by the choir of the same place, illustrations of church music were given ; while there were chamber concerts by Mrs. Denton (pianoforte), Miss Pierce (vocalist), and Miss Robinson (violinist), in an adjoining room, so that the main hall was never inconveniently crowded by the large assembly. A short time was set apart for speeches, chiefly for the purpose of welcoming the foreign delegates.

The CHAIRMAN, JOSEPH LUPTON, Esq., opened these proceedings by calling upon Mr. A. W. Worthington, one of the Secretaries, to read letters from some of the foreign representatives, who had been unable to attend. After mentioning the fact that pressure of business had prevented Herr Edward Wavrinsky, President of the Society of Rational Believers, in Göteborg, from fulfilling his intention of being present, Mr. Worthington read the following letters, explaining the absence of other invited and expected guests :—

“ LEIDEN, 7th March, 1888.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ I am very sorry that I am not able to attend the meetings of the National Conference, to be held at Leeds next April, and at which I intended to be present as the delegate of the Nederlandsche Protestantengenbond. There is so much work to be done by me at home for several weeks, that I cannot be absent next month. We are trying to find another member of our Committee who might be able and willing to take my place.

“ It is with great regret that I find myself detained here, and I hope that the Conference may be fruitful for the spread and the development of free religious thought and practice in England and America.

“ I am, Dear Sir, faithfully yours,

“ C. P. TIELE,

“ President of the Nederl. Protestantengenbond.”

"*KOLOZSVAR, HUNGARY, April the 8th, 1888.*

"*From the Representative Consistory of the Hungarian Unitarians to the National Conference of the English Unitarian and other Free Christian Churches, Fraternal greeting!*

"**DEAR CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,**

"In consequence of your kind invitation, it was our intention to send a deputy to your Conference. And the Rev. Chase Derzsi, minister of the Budapest Congregation, was appointed to represent us, personally, at Leeds. As the Rev. Ch. Derzsi, from circumstances which have occurred, cannot be present at the Conference, we wish to give expression, at least, in these lines, to our cordial greetings.

"We need not say what a great pleasure we all find in a movement which tends to spread free Christianity, for which we have worked and fought more than 300 years. As we see from the programme, your Conference will serve this noble end, too.

"And for this reason we greet you from the depth of our heart, wishing God's blessing on your gathering. May the seeds of your thoughts find a fertile soil everywhere, and bring forth fruit in abundance for the kingdom of God. With most kind regards, we remain,

"For the Representative Consistory,

"Your Christian Brethren,

"JOSEPH FERENCZA,

"*Bishop of the U. Ch. in Hungary.*

"A. KOVACSI,

"*Secretary.*"

---

"*PARIS, 18 Avril, 1888.*

"*54, RUE DE PRONY.*

"**MONSIEUR,**

"J'ai été infiniment sensible à l'honneur que vous m'avez fait de m'inviter à la Conférence Nationale que les diverses églises libérales d'Angleterre vont tenir, à Leeds, les 24, 25 et 26 de ce mois. Voué de toute mon âme, depuis ma jeunesse, à la défense des principes Chrétiens libéraux, dont mon Père et mon Frère ont été, j'ose le dire, les glorieux propagateurs au sein de notre Protestantisme Français, j'aurais considéré comme un privilège d'assister à vos réunions.

"Malheureusement mes occupations à Paris, où je suis chargé de la rédaction du journal *Le Protestant*, organe des Chrétiens libéraux, et l'état de ma santé, qui est médiocre, m'interdisent toute absence en ce moment, et, après avoir un moment espéré qu'il me serait possible de me rendre à Leeds, je me vois obligé d'y renoncer.

"Je serai de tout mon cœur avec vous, et fais des vœux ardents pour le succès, d'ailleurs certain, de vos réunions.

“ Dans ces sentiments, et vous renouvelant l'expression de ma reconnaissance pour votre aimable communication, je vous prie, Monsieur, de recevoir l'assurance de mes sentiments les plus fraternels et cordialement dévoués.

“ETIENNE COQUEREL.”

“ MILAN, VIA DURINI, 15, April 23rd, 1888.

“ DEAR SIR,

“ It was my intention and fond hope to be able to do honour to your kind invitation, and attend the National Conference of Free Christian Churches, which meets to-morrow in Leeds.

“ My two daughters' and my own state of health oblige me to give up the hope I entertained to the last, of being with you bodily.

“ I am, however, with you in mind, as in prayer, before Him in whom we all, both present and absent, living or departed this life, live and move and have our being.

“ May His presence be felt among us of the Free Christian Churches in these our meetings. May they lead to a better understanding, a closer union between us all, that may hasten the coming of His kingdom, the advent of the millennium of justice, peace, and brotherhood upon earth.

“ Need I say that I shall follow your proceedings with the liveliest interest and sympathy, and that any of the members of the Conference, who, passing at any time through Milan, should like to give me a friendly call, would be most welcome ?

“ With brotherly feelings, I am, Dear Sir,

“ Yours very truly,

“ FERDINANDO BRACCIFORTI.”

The CHAIRMAN then addressed the assembly as follows :—

Ladies and Gentlemen,—It is with some diffidence that I take the chair on this occasion. But my friends of the committee pressed the position upon me, and I thought I could not do other than assist, by my presence here in the chair, the interests of this great Conference. I am here to accord to you, from our friends in Leeds, and on behalf of this great town, a cordial welcome ; and that we give you from the bottom of our hearts. It was no ordinary circumstance in our lives, when, a few months ago, it was proposed to our congregation in Leeds that we should entertain you here. That proposal was favourably received, and the result is that we have now the pleasure of seeing you. Those who have taken a part in getting up these meetings must be amply satisfied, and more than gratified by the magnificent assembly this morning, when we heard from our great and revered leader of thought and religion—Dr. Martineau—that splendid address, which was one of those astounding efforts that we are rarely privileged to hear. He last Saturday attained his 83rd year, and yet he ventured this morning to address us in such a marvellous way as

we shall look back to hereafter with immense pleasure and gratification. I am asked, in place of Mr. Steinthal, whose health has prevented him from coming to Leeds, to welcome our foreign representatives. But one of these distinguished foreigners,—my friend, Mr. de Normandie,—does not allow me to call him a foreigner. The Americans are not foreigners in England, but are the nearest and best of friends. I cannot omit to refer, at this time, to the absence of one near and dear to me and to the Leeds congregation, one dear to you all,—the Rev. C. Hargrove, our minister,—whom we should have rejoiced to have seen on this platform during this Conference ; but I can assure you, from all we hear, that his health has been restored, and that we may shortly see him in Leeds again conducting those services which have been so eminently valuable. His absence has been, indeed, a severe trial to us, and, perhaps, greater to him than to us ; and his return will be hailed as one of those bright events of life which we all appreciate. And now, my friends, we have before you, on this platform, three gentlemen who represent distant parts of the world. There is my friend, Mr. de Normandie, who comes from Massachusetts ; there is also M. Cyr, who comes with credentials from Paris, signed, among others, by M. Etienne Coquerel, as representative of the liberal section of the Reformed Churches of France. Then, we have, from a far more distant clime, one whose presence reminds us of that great Indian from Calcutta,—Chunder Sen,—whom Leeds delighted to honour ; and of a later visitor almost as distinguished,—my friend, Mr. Mozoomdar. They represent a distant country to which we are much indebted ; for, as Chunder Sen said, it is from the East we have received the greatest blessings that mankind has secured. As Chairman, I ought to say a word or two,—and in the presence of those to whom we are so deeply indebted, for the success that has so far attended these meetings,—in reference to my colleagues, Mr. Mathers and Mr. Connell. You can hardly form an idea of the labour which they have gone through over these meetings. But it has been a pleasurable labour for them. On your behalf, and my own, I must thank them for the trouble and work they have gone through ; and I must tell them that I owe them more than ever I can repay, for their valuable and unanticipated aid. Some persons have asked me,—“ Of what avail are these Conferences ? ” “ Are they to do any good ? ” —“ Good ! ” said I. “ It has done good to me, if to no one else.” And when I look round at the happy faces before me, am I not assured this Conference has done good ? Even if it has called forth nothing but in the speech which we heard this morning, we are amply repaid ; and I say, “ Go on with the Triennial Conferences ! ” But, my friends, has it not done much more than that ? Will not those friends who were collected in Liverpool, six years ago, and three years ago, at Birmingham, say that they had the best evidence of the usefulness of these Conferences, in the fact, that they went home strengthened and refreshed, and better prepared for the great battle ? I say, “ battle,”—and a battle it is ; for, as long as the churches look upon us in the way they do, it is a *battle* we have to fight. We have yet to stand firm upon the great principles which

animate our Nonconformist churches. Have not such Conferences as this sent the members home strengthened and better prepared for the duties entailed upon them? And are not the speeches made, and which are to be made to-morrow, speeches of the highest and deepest interest that can possibly affect a large community? Then the idea falls,—it goes to the winds,—that these Conferences can be of no use. On the contrary, they are of the greatest value. They have shown themselves in every direction to be one of the most valuable institutions that we could possibly have. Out of them has sprung one of the greatest and best supports of our ministers that was ever provided,—the Sustenation Fund. I will now call upon my friend, Mr. de Normandie, from Roxburgh, Massachusetts.

The Rev. JAMES DE NORMANDIE, Chairman of the Council of the American Unitarian Conference, who was applauded on rising, said :—“Mr. Chairman, Brethren by a Common Faith, Ladies and Gentlemen,—It is a great privilege and pleasure to be the bearer of hearty greetings from the National Conference of our Churches in America to your Conference here to-night, and to receive from you so hearty a welcome, a welcome which I am sure no words of mine can thank you sufficiently for. And yet this is something we have rather come to expect from our English friends, ever since our distinguished minister, Mr. Russell Lowell, has helped so much to bring about a better understanding between the two lands. And it is a welcome, as I am sure there are many here to-night can say, which we are only too glad to give to you whenever you do us the honour to come to our Conferences. When I found myself in Mill Hill Chapel at the communion service yesterday afternoon, there came to me a memory, which I think must be of some interest to many of you, and certainly to your honourable chairman to-night. When I was quite a boy, some of my principal playmates were the descendants of Dr. Priestley. My first Sunday School teacher was his granddaughter. As a boy I used to play in the attic of his son’s house, among the philosophical and chemical apparatus which he had gathered around him in the little village of Northumberland, Pennsylvania, after most of it had been destroyed by the mob in Birmingham. And the first views I had of this faith, which is so dear to us, were gathered from his successor, of whom some of you may know something—the Rev. James Kay,—who, to my childish eyes, and to my memory, still remains as the most beautiful ideal of the Christian minister; who, when he had grown so old that he could no longer preach from the pulpit, used to gather us in his study on a Sunday afternoon, and like a venerable apostle tell us that the whole of religion consisted in this,—“Little children, love one another.” And, as a boy, I remember again and again standing, on a summer afternoon, by the grave of Priestley, and reading the simple inscription on his tombstone, and thinking of the faith which gave such courage, such gentleness, such “sweet reasonableness” to him, as never forsook him; as it did, also, to that other distinguished man who gave that phrase such currency. I say the faith which gave such courage, such gentleness, and such sweet reasonableness, it seemed to me, could hardly be wrong.

Surely, that faith must have done very much to give to Dr. Priestley that simple clear vision of eternal things, which impelled one of the most rigid of the Calvinist divines, who wrote the hymn "Rock of Ages," to say that Priestley was like a crystal that one could hold up in one's hand and look through. You have been pleased, Mr. Chairman, to refer to that country which I am proud to call my home. It is, as all of you are accustomed to say, a great country ; it is vast in its area, boundless in its resources, and in the golden opportunities and promises which it holds out to all the children of the earth. But has it not occurred to you that, after all, the little countries are the ones that have done the things which we most desire to imitate, and which we bear most tenderly in our memories ? Is not Holland, making an everlasting struggle against the sea or against tyrants more relentless still, more than the whole continent of Africa ? Greece, with her Plato and her Socrates, is more than the vast area of the Russias. Yes, and it is just one life in that little Palestine, no larger than the State of Massachusetts, which accounts for more in the world's history than all the rest of the kingdoms of the world. And still more ; is it not to your own little island here, with its boundless enterprise, with its noble patriotism, with its generous philanthropy, and with its sweet home life, that the world still turns for its hopes ? America is great, but in our moments of reflection, we want to ask whether it is growing greater in the things which make for *true* greatness. And, that it should do that, we want your help ; we want the help of all noble spirits throughout the world, and we want the help of that God who makes for righteousness for all who are fellow labourers with Him. If it attain true greatness, I believe it may do so, by reason of that simple faith which is represented by your churches here to-night—that simple, glorious, Christian faith, which has been so beautifully illustrated by our Dr. Channing, and by your Dr. Martineau.

DVYA DAS DATTA, M.A., late professor in the University of Calcutta, next spoke, as representative of the Brahmo Somaj. He said : Mr. Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—It gives me the greatest pleasure to-night to appear before you as representing that country far away, over seas and oceans—a country that, by the mysterious economy of Providence, has been united to you politically. It gives me the greatest pleasure to speak to you a few words, which will perhaps interest you, as to the growth of the human mind in that distant land. Perhaps, in that remote country, you would find an echo to your own sentiments. Thoughts are there working that might truly be said to be a very copy of your own—yet no foreign, but a home-grown article. It is a testimony beyond dispute, of the sublimity, the great depth of the religion which fuses us together. It is commonly believed, that through the political lowness, and through the physical weakness of the Indian people, they are morally and intellectually, perhaps, wofully deficient. Our representative—the representative of modern India, whose name is familiar to many of you—and the late lamented bishop, of whom our President spoke so kindly, may have convinced you that if India is very low, very ignorant, and very

weak physically, she has yet within her parts, which, if developed, may perhaps be of some use to the world. The Indian mind to-day is throwing off its old superstition. But the glory of India to-day is that she has not fallen into modern superstition. It is a patent fact, known I hope to most of you, what a miserable failure the superstition under the Trinitarian name has met with in that distant country. In spite of all their efforts among the enlightened part of the Indian people, the Trinitarian superstition has made no progress whatever, and for you a glorious conquest is taking place, although you have not spent large sums of money. The mind of the people, however inefficiently developed, is growing towards you. The spirit of the great man, whom I named before, belongs to the country. The rationalistic movement, discarding superstition in every shape and form, is becoming the very spirit of India to-day. And the reason is clear. It is for you to open the gates, to open the way for the culture of the heart. The human heart moves by sympathy. Here I stand to-day, a foreigner, homeless, out of home, and yet that bond of sympathy of the common faith unites us, and I feel as if I am in my own home. The bond of faith is greater than any. Time and distance, the distinctions of race, vanish before it ; and when the core of the heart is touched by the true moral growth of the inner man, India shall be united really and truly with England, and, through England, with all the world, wherever truth prospers. That time is not distant, if we will all be true to our inner selves. Notwithstanding the decay of culture that happened a century ago in India, there were times when it produced men who occupied themselves more worthily. Perhaps it would be interesting to you if I quoted a few words in the Sanscrit language. Perhaps you may like the rhythm of it. After the quotation, the speaker said that this beautiful idea was that man's conception of his relation to his Maker is unity in itself. They speak of our Maker as a great bridge supporting these worlds that men had come to wreck — a bridge, indeed, supporting by physical power all the worlds in their place ; but the love of God and man is even a greater bridge, and can alone, really and truly, bridge over the distances that now separate man from man, and the gulf of hostility between nations. True faith, faith in the power of God and love to man, is the bridge that will unite all the world together. Our numbers are limited ; perhaps it is a melancholy thought. But I find consolation in the very fewness of our numbers ; and why ? Whilst every other sect inherits its religion, you, my friends, find out religion by real, personal enquiry—by inward conviction. You do not receive your faith as others inherit clothes, from their ancestors. Every Unitarian, every man who thinks freely, I believe, is a trophy of victory of the great truth of religion against superstition. Every one of you, I believe, is equal to hundreds of those who receive their religion by inheritance. And when I consider that this great movement is not confined to a particular country ; that it is going like wild-fire into a great forest ; that it is showing itself in all parts of the world ; I cannot but gather courage and hope. When I reflect that truth has been a great guarantee of victory all

through the history of the world ; and when I know we are certain of the truth, we cannot but be sure of victory, however long it may be in coming. And here, again, allow me to quote another word—a saying of our ancient Hindoo sages—a word of hope indeed, “Truth alone conquers, not untruth.” Let this be your conviction, and you shall surely be numerically stronger in time than all the faiths of the world. I therefore beg, from the bottom of my heart, to convey my thanks on behalf of the Brahmo Somaj, and I receive the same from you, with the surest hope that our cause will succeed in those distant climes.

M. LE PASTEUR NARCISSE CYR, representing the Liberal delegation of the Reformed Churches of France, next addressed the assembly. He said : Mr. Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—I have only ten minutes, yet I have matter for two hours. I trust this is not the only opportunity I shall enjoy in England. I come to you as the representative of the Liberal Churches of France. I consider it a great honour to have been chosen, and it is owing, not certainly to my wealth, but to the fact that I know the English language a little better than those who don't know it at all. As I have been lecturing three or four times a week in French, visiting the churches of France, and, of course, lecturing in French, I feel that I am not quite ready to speak in English. But still I will do my best, and I hope, gradually, I will be able to speak better. Many of you know how the Liberal Churches of France were discouraged by the death of one of their lamented and sainted heads. You know there was a great opportunity of doing great things for the faith after the Prussian war, but that Orthodoxy, instead of trying to do that great thing to free their faith from superstition, conceived the plan of driving away from that church the ministers who would not subscribe to the creed ; and for several years there was discouragement. But for the last seven years there has been an organisation, and that organisation has been doing a great deal, though they are in great want at the present time. There are in France 200 Liberal Churches. The Reformed Church of France contains 103 presbyteries. Forty of these presbyteries, in spite of all efforts, have stood firm to this day, and by a convention—a conference like this—they have established a committee in Paris, for the general interest of the Liberal branch of that church. M. Coquerel has a brother on that committee. There are fifteen of the best men, who are working and doing all they can. Now, there are 30 churches which are without pastors at the present time. I have been among those churches ; I have preached to them in December and January—large churches, without any fire or warmth at all ; and yet on the week-day evening, through rain and through mud, I have had audiences of 500, 600, and even a thousand of these Protestants in France. In eleven days I delivered ten discourses, and I wanted to show what a young man can do. Well, my friends, what we want now in France is a little help. We have established a training school, to prepare young men to enter the theological faculties. In France, Protestant ministers must be bachelors in divinity as well as bachelors in letters. There has been a great lack of ministers, and I don't wonder that their prospects are

so discouraging, for they receive from the State only £72., or £80. if they live in a large town; or if they live in a city, then they get £88. Now, of course, in large cities, where the Protestants are pretty numerous, the salary is supplemented. But still there are many places where the people are poor, especially in the mountains of the Cevennes, and so young men have not been encouraged to become ministers, and especially in the present crisis. They have 31 young men. If we had more means we could have 50. There are 30 churches at the present time without pastors, and we are going to supply them as well as we can. I met with several ministers who are willing to go and spend their vacation, spend a month there, one after another, so as to keep these churches alive. Now, my friends, I am very happy to be here and to find myself with the English. The English I have always known more or less, but it seems to me that, in Leeds more especially, there is something I have not found everywhere; there is such a cordiality here that I feel quite at home, and it seemed to me when I heard you applaud that you were more excitable than Frenchmen. Take a Frenchman, make a Protestant of him, and he is a new man. And what proves it? It is the history of France; it is the history of these Huguenots, whom you call Hugenots. Well, I will call them "huge knots." Well, my friends, these Huguenots, as we say in France, have come to England, and they have brought industry with them, intelligence, and morality, and wherever they have gone they have left brilliant traces behind them; and on this very day, as I was hearing Dr. Martineau, in my heart I felt proud to belong to the French race. I said, "Now, here is a specimen of the Huguenot. Here is a man that can say, 'The wrinkles of my brow have not reached to my heart.'" Well, we want these churches that are weak—we want to make them stronger; these churches that were without pastors—we want to find pastors for them. Some of these pastors are struggling to educate a family on £72. a year; and that is all they get, the churches not being accustomed to give, or not being able to give. I saw there, in December, a minister who had seven daughters round his table. He had had eleven children, and some had died when about ready to help him; and when I saw the mother in the kitchen, preparing the meal, and happy and hopeful, bearing this great burden, and yet happy, I said, "Here is heroism; here is Christian heroism." Well, we want to help some of these. Now, my friends, let there be union between the Protestants of France, the Liberal Protestants of France and the Liberal Protestants of England and of America; and by this union, by cultivating this intercourse, I have no doubt that you can do a great deal. France may sometime be able to do something, but at the present time *you* have the opportunity of doing good, and I trust you will improve it. My life has been marked by two evolutions. At the age of 17, I left the Romish church to enter the Protestant church. I then joined the church that had been the means of my conversion, the Baptist church. They were not very hard-shell Baptists, and I could get along. I went to Geneva, and studied there, and then returned to

America, and laboured there. But, seven years ago, the strait jacket was too heavy for me. Though I felt well, I was getting old, and I said, "Before I am too old I must come into the freedom of the gospel of Jesus Christ: and, having been invited to go to France to labour, I decided I would labour half my time in France, and go among the churches as a missionary, to awaken up those who are sleepy, and to strengthen the weak; and the other half I will go beg in England and in America, so that those principles which are the religion of the future in France, as everywhere else, may have free course, and be glorified."

The speaking then closed, but the conversazioné, which brought together a large number of friends from all parts of the country, continued for some time, breaking up about 10 o'clock.





## PROCEEDINGS OF THE THIRD DAY,

THURSDAY, 26TH APRIL, 1888.

---

THE Proceedings to-day were again commenced with a largely-attended DEVOTIONAL SERVICE in MILL HILL CHAPEL, under the leadership of the Rev. James Harwood, B.A., of Nottingham, assisted by the Revs. W. M. Ainsworth, of Brixton, H. E. Dowson, B.A., of Gee Cross, and P. H. Wicksteed, M.A., of London, who replaced the Rev. S. A. Steinthal, of Manchester, whom illness detained from the Meeting.



## MORNING SESSION.

---

AT half-past ten o'clock, the CONFERENCE was resumed in the Town Hall ; C. W. JONES, Esq., of Liverpool, presiding. The first subject for consideration was, "Our Duties in the Old Universities."

The CHAIRMAN said : I regret exceedingly that I have to open these proceedings with an apology. Dr. Odgers was unfortunately telegraphed for, and, last night, he was obliged to return to London. However, we have amongst us the next best thing to Dr. Odgers himself, and that is his brother. I will call upon the Rev. J. C. Odgers to read the Paper that his brother has written.

The Rev. J. C. OGDERS then read the Paper, which was entitled—

### OUR DUTIES IN THE OLD UNIVERSITIES.

IT is not often that novelists take any notice of our humble denomination. I was, therefore, surprised to come upon the following passage in "Harper's Magazine," in a tale by Mr. Howells :—"Mrs. Pasmer herself remained inalienably Unitarian, but she was aware of the prodigious growth which the church had been making in society, and when Alice showed her inclination for it, she felt that it was not at all as if she had developed a taste for orthodoxy ; when finally it did not seem likely to go too far, it amused Mrs. Pasmer that her daughter should have taken so intensely to the Anglican rite."

This, then, is what is said about us when anything at all is said, that we are secretly pleased to see our children going over to the Church because we know it will help them on in society, and that the earnestness and zeal with which they embrace their new opinions merely affords us amusement.

Is this true ? I trust not. But if not, is there any ground for such a charge ? Is there anything in the way in which we educate our

children which would lead outsiders to suppose that we are careless or indifferent as to their religious opinions, or that we were willing that they should sacrifice consistency to social advancement?

Thirty or forty years ago, Unitarian children were educated, as a rule, at Unitarian schools. The boys went to Mr. Malleson's, Mr. Case's, Mr. Davis's, or, still longer ago, to Dr. Lant Carpenter's; the girls to Miss Lalor's or Miss Buob's. And thus each child was strengthened in his individual faith, and valuable friendships were formed which still unite Unitarian families in different parts of the kingdom. The sons of wealthier Unitarians, after leaving school, went to University Hall; their daughters, to Bedford College. At both institutions the Unitarians took the foremost place; and the students at both were proud to attend the services conducted by Dr. Martineau, in Little Portland Street Chapel.

Now, things are very different. The advance of liberal thought within the church has made it possible for Unitarians to send their boys to large public schools such as Clifton, Marlborough, and Cheltenham, where they attend service in the school chapels. The older Universities, too, have at last opened their doors and their emoluments to Dissenters of all denominations, and Unitarian parents have not been slow to avail themselves of the privilege of entering their sons at these ancient foundations. While for girls, Girton and Newnham have been created at Cambridge, and high schools established in every large town in England.

Now, though this change is a matter for joyful congratulation, yet it brings with it its own dangers. I remember, when a boy, reading in the "Pall Mall Gazette" a leading article, which made me very angry. It was an argument in favour of Sir John Coleridge's bill, pointing out that it was short-sighted policy on the part of the Church of England to oppose the admission of Dissenters into the National Universities, as their admission would be the surest way to turn them into Churchmen. I remember the article referred to the old slander, that no Dissenting family ever kept its carriage for three generations; and drew the inference that the social and other influences to which he would be subject at the University, would soon bring the young Dissenter within the fold of the Established Church. I was highly

indignant at the idea that Dissenters could not hold their own at a University as well as anywhere else. Yet, I know now that there was some truth in the views expressed in that leading article.

A young man going up to Oxford or Cambridge, is exposed to all the fascinations of an ancient ritual at a time of life when he is most susceptible to such influences. The Church of England is presented in a University town in its most attractive form ; all that architecture and music can do to enhance the beauty of its services is there. At every turn he sees before him records of the ancient glories of the Established Church. The University pulpit is occupied by the best and ablest preachers of the day ; the daily service in his College chapel is conducted in a simple and attractive manner by the tutors with whom he is daily brought in contact, and whom he respects and likes. Both the preachers at St. Mary's and the tutors who officiate at the College service, are all, of course, clergymen of the Church of England. There is nothing to remind the young man of the existence of Dissent. On the other hand, there is nothing to cause him offence ; there is no persecution to arouse opposition ; he is not compelled to attend the College chapel, if he claims exemption ; he need not go to St. Mary's at all, unless he likes. But he generally does both, because his friends and fellow-undergraduates do both ; he attends to the choral services at Trinity, King's, and John's. And he cannot help contrasting these crowded chapels with the plain building, the scant attendance, and the unattractive service to which he is used on Sundays at home. And the question must arise, "Why may I not go up to the house of God with the multitude ?" He hears the most liberal expressions of the most advanced thought from men who have signed the Thirty-nine Articles, and who are fully-ordained priests of the Established Church ; surely, then, he can, without inconsistency, become a mere lay member of that Church : indeed, he is assured that by law he is one already.

There are much worse things that can happen to our children than their being genuinely converted to Trinitarianism, though, of course, we earnestly desire that they should all remain avowed Unitarians. I think it is the duty of Unitarian parents to explain to their children the reasons why we dissent from the State Church, and to prepare

them to meet and to confute the orthodox arguments founded on the literal inspiration of the Bible, or on the authority of the Creeds. If this be done, I do not fear the proselytizing zeal of the Evangelical or of the Ritualist sections of the Church, though the presence of a Unitarian minister in each University town would be a great encouragement and assistance to the undergraduate who is resisting such attacks. But the danger which it is more difficult to counteract, comes from our friends, the Broad Churchmen, whose arguments in favour of levelling up, and of broadening the Church from within, have a special fascination for a young Unitarian who earnestly desires to put an end to the battle of the sects, and who looks forward to a universal church in the distant future. Here, there is a distinct temptation to occasional conformity, to despising the name of Dissenter, to indifference as to creed altogether ; and so gradually the way is paved for such contemptible conduct as joining the Creed-bound Church for the sake of its *prestige*, or for social or professional advancement, while still unconvinced of the truth of the doctrines it promulgates. How can this be obviated, unless some friend be at hand who will point out the stern necessity of strict fidelity to truth ; who will recall the fact that we Dissenters, too, have our *prestige* in the glorious records of the past ; who will dwell on the noble stand made by our ancestors against priest and king for conscience' sake ; and who will impress on their descendants the absolute duty of maintaining the sacred cause of truth, even though it be unpopular in one set, or unfashionable in another. There would be such a friend at hand if we had a Unitarian chapel in each University town, with a minister who knew how to interest and to influence young men.

There is yet a greater danger that the seductions of the Broad Church. The young Unitarian, who finds himself in antagonism with his Church friends on all religious matters, may be driven to take refuge with the Positivists or the Secularists. There are several such now at both Universities. Many, who are disgusted and repelled by the narrowness and inconsistency of the creeds, fly to the other extreme through ignorance of any system of pure and rational Christianity, and embrace with eagerness the more aggressive forms of Agnosticism. To such as these Unitarianism is a puzzle and a contradiction. "If you

don't believe in the blood of Jesus, if you deny that the Bible is the sole rule of conduct, if you refuse to sign the 39 Articles, then why don't you go the whole length with us, and emancipate yourself entirely from the trammels of all creeds?" They cannot understand our halting at a half-way house. Such a position seems to them timid and illogical. Why "linger shivering on the brink, and fear to launch away?" Our children must be taught to withstand the vehement onslaught of the Secularist and the Agnostic, before their religious education can be regarded as complete. I know, as a fact, that the "National Reformer," the "Freethinker," and other such publications, are freely circulated and eagerly devoured in many of the Colleges of Cambridge.

It is unsafe to rely upon the influences of early training, or upon discussions in vacation on holiday rambles, to counteract such attacks. The only efficient safeguard, in my opinion, is the establishment in each University town of a Chapel, in which our clear, simple, and positive faith will be preached each Sunday, to all who will come and hear.

So far, I have based my argument on a narrow, though a very important issue. I have addressed you solely in the interests of our own children, or of such of them as are likely to be sent to those older Universities; and also in the interests of our denomination, which would suffer a most serious loss if these children ceased to be active and avowed Unitarians. So far, in short, I have appealed to the instinct of self-preservation. But there is a wider and a higher ground on which I rest my appeal.

Oxford and Cambridge are intellectual centres. There is permanently resident in each a body of highly-cultured men and women, many of whom, though outwardly conforming to the Established Church, are out of harmony with its teachings, and are vaguely drifting into Positivist or Agnostic views. Into this society comes, each term, a large contingent of the youth of our country; among them, probably, are these who will be the foremost thinkers, writers, preachers, and statesmen of the next generation. When they leave the University they will be scattered far and wide throughout the country, and will influence for good and evil the life and thought of the English nation

in the next century. No one, who remembers "the Oxford movement" of forty years ago, will deny that the older Universities are centres from which thought radiates throughout the nation. No doubt the same can be said, with equal or even greater truth, of London ; that is, no doubt, the place in which, if you have anything to say, it is best worth your while to say it. But next to the metropolis, I know of no city from which you can speak so directly to the whole nation, as you could by preaching at Oxford or at Cambridge. For there your audience is constantly changing, is constantly spreading itself throughout the kingdom ; if only you can gain a hearing there, your words will find an echo, by and by, in every county.

The vast majority of the students are genuinely orthodox ; they have been educated in orthodox beliefs, and have unhesitatingly accepted what they learnt. Many of them will very probably pass through life without ever questioning any doctrine they were taught in their infancy. But even these quietly-receptive individuals are a little troubled by the differences they discover within the Church itself. They find High Church arrayed against Low Church, and the Broad Church attacking both ; they are undoubtedly puzzled at such discord ; and some of them will thus be led to enquire into the reasons for the faith that is in them. But there are other and stronger minds—men who no longer accept the creed they learnt at school, and who are vaguely feeling after a simpler and a purer faith than any that is offered them by the churches that are at present represented in our older University towns. They have tried Ritualism, Evangelicalism, Positivism, and have come away in thousands of cases bewildered or disgusted, and they are sinking fast into sheer indifference to all religious matters, simply because no attempt is made to set before them that form of Christianity which now prevails amongst us, and which is exactly fitted to satisfy the yearning of their souls. Year after year, the best intellect of young England is passing through Oxford and Cambridge, meeting every other form of Christian belief but ours ; and we, who believe we hold the truth,—we, who prize and value our religious freedom, make no effort to arouse their interest, to draw them into sympathy with us, to share with them the truth we hold, and the religious liberty we boast. I maintain, Sir, that it is our duty to give these young men the chance

of at least hearing the views we entertain, and the opportunity of learning what Unitarianism, in these days, means. We must not let them drift away into Agnosticism, or relapse into the Roman Catholic Church, unaware of the existence of our faith, —unaware that any group of Englishmen professes such belief.

Oh ! but how is it to be done ? We have not the money, we have not the man ! Besides, the thing has been tried once at Cambridge, and proved a failure. What chance is there that a second attempt would prove any more successful than the first ? . . . \*

Yes ! there are difficulties in the way—great difficulties. It would be difficult to find precisely the right man. It would be very difficult to set to work in the right way—the results of our effort would be very small and very discouraging at first. But difficulties are meant to be overcome ; it is no credit to us to do something that presents no difficulty at all. As to the money, I am not going to admit that there would be any very great, or insurmountable difficulty, about that. My experience is that, when once you satisfy the Unitarian body that it is their duty to do a particular thing, that thing gets done ; the money is forthcoming somehow. Now here my object is to convince you who are present, and through you the Unitarian body generally, that it is our duty with all reasonable despatch, and after all due preliminary experiment, to build a handsome chapel both in Oxford and in Cambridge, and to place there two of our very best ministers, and to maintain them there until they have founded an entirely self-supporting congregation in each town. If you agree with me that this is our duty, I think the necessary funds will be found. For, putting aside for the moment the University altogether, why are not the townsfolk of Oxford and Cambridge to have the true Gospel preached unto them ; why are not these places as worthy of the expenditure of Unitarian money in them as Bessell's Green or Ditchling ?

“ But the attempt was once made at Cambridge, and it failed.” So much the better ! We have all the advantage of former experience ; we shall know what to avoid in future ! Why did it fail ? Because the “ Mission,” as it was called, held its services up some backstairs in a poor street, in a room with a billiard-table behind the pulpit. No wonder it was a failure ! Even the sons of Unitarian ministers, then

up at Cambridge, were ashamed to come near the place. Not even all the zeal and ability of my friend, Mr. Chalmers, could succeed under such circumstances.

No ! the thing must be done well, and with self-respect, or not at all. It may be necessary to break the ground, in the first instance, by week-evening lectures by our leading ministers, delivered in the Guild-hall, or some other room of repute. But our aim should be, sooner or later, to build a chapel of our own. The services should, in my opinion, be announced as distinctly "Unitarian." This name will, I think, be found to attract rather than repel ; the inquiring undergraduate, who has heard Unitarians abused, will come to see if they really deserve the hard names that were bestowed on them. Besides, whatever you call the building, it will certainly, after the first few weeks, be known throughout the town as "The Unitarian Chapel." The building must be such as will attract attention, and invite both "Gown and Town" to enter ; there must be good music, or none at all ; the minister must be one of our brightest and ablest men—a man of tact, perseverance, and courage, eloquent and scholarly, earnest and clear—such another—if there can be found such another—as he whose recent death we all deplore.

One word of warning and I have done. There was a proposal made, some four or five years ago, to remove Manchester New College bodily to Oxford. This suggestion, rightly or wrongly, did not find favour with the majority of the Trustees of that College, and has for the present at all events, been dropped, and I certainly do not want to revive it to-day. Transplanting an existing college is a very different thing from starting a new chapel, and totally different considerations apply to the two matters. Please, therefore, let me taboo all reference to Manchester New College this morning. I beg and entreat that the approaching discussion may be confined to this question :—Is it, or is it not our duty, as Unitarians professing a form of Christianity which we believe to be purer and truer and nobler than any now taught in the older University towns,—is it, or is it not our duty to found in each a chapel wherein that form of Christianity may be preached, boldly and clearly, to Town and Gown alike ?

The CHAIRMAN then announced the rules of the discussion, and said he would reserve to the end of the discussion the few remarks which he intended to make.

The Rev. R. A. ARMSTRONG opened the discussion. He said : Mr. Chairman,— I am, for my part, most deeply grateful to Dr. Odgers for introducing the present topic to the Conference, and extremely regret his enforced absence and his inability to read his Paper. It has been given to me to open the discussion upon it, not from any other fitness on my part than that which arises from a profound and burning interest in the theme. What Dr. Odgers has told us is true, and momentous as it is true. We cannot shake ourselves free from a transcendent responsibility in this matter. Old faiths are breaking up ; the new faith, which is no other than the old faith of Jesus Christ, assimilating all that is best and truest in modern thought and science, is the crying need of our time, the one thing that can save the world. And we, with awe and with humility I say it, we are the custodians of that one faith which can live, and we are called of God to be its teachers and its preachers. We are waking up to this vast responsibility in the great centres of population—waking all too slowly and too feebly. But urgent as our duty is to speak our word to the artisans of England, the duty presses on us at least as urgently to speak in our ancient Universities. For that is true which we have been told. These are the springs of the intellectual life of England. Thence flow out year after year, over the cities and counties of our land, the bravest, brightest, most cultured of our sons and daughters, a perpetual stream bearing on its bosom the destinies of our race. If Oxford and Cambridge—nay, if a few of the best and truest in Oxford and Cambridge—carry in their hearts a faith sweet and pure, sustained by clear and thoughtful understanding, then the England of to-morrow has a religion, and the Church of Christ rises up re-born.

But it is true, no less, that much of this young England there concentrated, is bewildered and confounded by the seething controversy of our time. Some of these young men sink back, after one dazed glance round the battlefield, into the arms of orthodox authority, and are lost irredeemably to the forces of religious freedom and religious progress. Others of them are carried swiftly along into the schools where men treat God and his life and love as a superstition which can be maintained no more, a superstition from which the world is to shake itself free for ever. Yet others dimly feel their way, with pathetic longing, towards some better hope, which yet they cannot fix and hold ; or, if they be so happy, indeed, as to find out that God is their Father and Christ their brother, yet they fancy themselves alone in that faith, and remain wholly ignorant that any countrymen of theirs preach that as the sum and substance, the bright certainty and gladness of religion. And then these men go forth to the north and to the south, and if they ever hear of us at all, hear of us vaguely as only one more sect with its little code of dogmas, worshipping God after some crude manner in obscure corners of the world. Brethren, are you content with that ? and when the Master comes, shall we say to him, “ Lord, we once buried our talent up some backstairs in Cambridge, and

labelled it ‘Unitarian Mission ;’ was not that enough ? There thou hast that is thine !” Brethren, will you be content with that ? Or, do you hear the call of the Lord to his servants : “I have committed to you a mighty trust ; be of good courage, and proclaim my word !” Dr. Odgers is ambitious. He invites you to build two handsome chapels. That means, at least, £10,000 down. He invites you to take from our existing churches two of our brightest and ablest men, and set them down in Oxford and Cambridge. That means, I am afraid, at least £1,000. a year. And it means, what is much more, removing, from posts of influence and power, two men whom you cannot spare—whom you can spare less and less, as God gathers to himself our noblest leaders. I propose to you a smaller scheme, but one, I think, not less fraught with hope. I ask you at most for £200. a year ; and I ask our leading churches, in whose service these brightest and ablest men now are, for a smaller sacrifice.

Dr. Odgers deprecates allusion to Manchester New College. But I will say thus much in regard to it. It is my earnest hope that its governors may, ere long, see their way to transplant it to the place where it has a right to be—the University of Oxford. That proposal, though we have nothing to do with it here and need not discuss it, is again, at any rate, within the sphere of practical politics. If it be carried out, the college will have its college chapel, served by our very best and ablest men. Almost the last words spoken to me by Dr. Charles Beard, only a few weeks since, recorded his informed and convinced belief that that chapel would prove one of the most popular religious resorts in Oxford. In view, then, of the possibility of that migration, it is needless for this Conference to concern itself with Oxford, and we may concentrate our discussion on our duty in the sister University. What, then, ought we to do at Cambridge ? First, let us realise that we go there for the sake of the University, and not for the sake of the townsmen. Town and Gown require quite different modes of approach, and it will only be mischievous to aim at both. As for the town, it offers a far less hopeful field to us than some of the stirring towns of Lancashire or Yorkshire, where our faith is still unpreached ; and if it is towns-folk you are after, you had much better lay out your money in the North. At Cambridge, aim straight at Gown. Let Town come in if it will ; but lay your plans, without swerving, for the mind and heart of the University itself. What, then, shall we do ? It is the young, earnest, bewildered thought of men of educated status that we wish to reach. Build no chapel. Engage for the eight Sundays of each of the two winter terms a hall of respectable association which undergraduates are accustomed to visit, such as the Guildhall room, where last autumn I lectured on Religious Life and Thought, to an excellent and most sympathetic audience all quick and ready for a Gospel such as ours. Call on the leading churches which enjoy the services of our most accomplished preachers, each to give up in turn their man for one month, say, once in two or three years. Thus, in each season, you will have a rota of four select University preachers. To each of these you must give £5. a Sunday, which will pay

his travelling expenses and secure him a suitable supply for his own pulpit. Be sure the fit men will gladly accept their turn at the task without fee or reward for themselves. And they will come back to their own pulpits refreshed, brightened, quickened: so that their own churches will not be without their recompense. For the other expenses, I think £5. a Sunday will suffice; so that, for £160. a-year, the whole movement may be carried out in the best, most dignified, most effective, and most hopeful way. Are there sixteen men among us who will guarantee that cost for five years to come? The only drawback to my proposal is that, unlike Dr. Odgers's, it presents no difficulty at all. The opener has told us, Sir, that many there be who cannot understand our halting at a half-way house between orthodoxy and the negation of religion. Ah! let us never admit that our Tabernacle stands on that downward slope. It is no half-way house to infidelity. True, we know little. True, we cannot see far, except when we lift our eyes on high to the solemn stars above. True, our house stands not far out of the wood. But it is a little higher up the hill than the churches which build on sacrament or creed,—a little further on the road to that mountain summit of the knowledge of God, which is bathed in the white light of heaven. See the young men and maidens wandering confused and baffled in the mists below. Shall we let them be, or shall we stretch out the hand of helping, and bid them come up a little higher into the purer, sweeter air?

The Rev. ANDREW CHALMERS (Wakefield) said:—Mr. Armstrong has come to extremely sensible and prudent conclusions. This Paper ought to have some definite result, and perhaps a few words from me can confirm what Mr. Armstrong has said. The three years' experience which I had in Cambridge, was, in some respects, of a painful nature; in other respects, of a most delightful kind. I went there believing that much more was possible than I found to be possible; that town and gown might mingle in some movement of this kind; but I see now that Mr. Armstrong is right, that whatever we do should be done definitely, clearly, and determinedly, with a view to the students in the University, and that we have in our great manufacturing centres, far better fields for our mission operations, or propaganda, than in Cambridge. Now, when there, I found a great difficulty in getting families to join us, but we strove earnestly to collect a congregation. I need not describe the place we met at; that billiard table and green baize cloth have become historical. To have asked for subscriptions to build a chapel worthy of the movement, would have been something like asking the Pilgrim Fathers to build a cathedral on Plymouth Rock, while starvation stared them in the face. We had to be content with that tabernacle, squalid and wretched as it was. The kind of proselytes I got were to some extent extremely satisfactory; in others, scarcely so. We were a motley company. Many of those who came to join us were faithful men; but I must say that there were men who had been quietly elbowed out of other churches who found a refuge with us, not so much from our dogmatic freedom as because they had been unfortunate,—no fewer than five of my principal adherents having

passed through the bankruptcy court. I gathered around me there some twenty families, who had nothing to lose, but, unfortunately, at the same time, from whom we could gain but little. But they were faithful and true, and to this day I receive letters which surprise me by the vitality with which these people cling to that cause, and by the grasp with which some of these humble people, some of them even day labourers, have mastered the principles and doctrines of Unitarianism. The news of our work spread to various villages, and from Waterbeach some of the market gardeners used to walk each way to our services and offer their small subscriptions, and invited me to come and enjoy their hospitality. They also offered to pay the rent of a small meeting place if I would come and conduct services there. So much for the town. In regard to the University, I found there was very little difficulty with these people. In regard to town and gown mixing, as a labouring man said to me, just as he sat close to a titled reader of Indian law, "You can see these University gentlemen don't mind us, because we make no professions." To found a self-supporting church by the lower middle classes, would be difficult. When the first group of supporters left, and I lost 15 at one time at the end of the first year, it dawned upon me that we should have to call on the students to help them to carry on the movement themselves. And so we commenced religious conferences for them in the morning, and the services for the townspeople in the evening. These conferences were no failure but a great success, and the cause of success was due, not to me, but to the students themselves. During the last two terms, an average of 38 University students attended in the morning, and 13 lady students from Girton and Newnham, making 51 of the very class we wish most to influence, and there is nothing that so much astonishes me in relation to the movement at Cambridge as the manner in which this has been ignored. The movement there, in spite of all the wretched surroundings and the extreme financial pressure under which we worked, was no failure. We had some of the finest men, the best testimony to which is, that while that generation of students remained at Cambridge, this movement went on. The conferences were exceedingly interesting. Sometimes I gave the address, sometimes I asked a student to do it. Sometimes such a valuable helper as Sir Rowland Wilson would give the address. We had thus an interchange of intellectual and religious thought and life and influence, and in every case there was the most perfect sympathy. And, in the presence of wide differences of opinion, there was a clear and definite understanding that we were all in search of truth. That work remains in my memory as perhaps the best I ever did, or will do; as one of the greatest privileges ever given to me. What was the reason it all came to an end? Simply through sheer financial exhaustion; the money was all spent. It was due to me and my friend, Mr. Steinthal, alone, that it was carried on so long; and I wish to record my gratitude to him who, in the midst of severe bodily illness, struggled nobly to make this a success, and gave it a time sufficient to prove what could be done there. I may say that the balance-sheet of the Cambridge

movement for the last year has never been presented ; Mr. Steinthal and I never compared notes on the subject. I knew he had lost a good deal, and I will say nothing of what I lost. I cared nothing if I could do something towards fulfilling the promises and hopes that many had entertained regarding it. But this I feel, that some such movement as Mr. Armstrong has suggested, can be begun again, and a free religious society, or Unitarian society as a kind of working basis for this, can be established. A few of our wealthier men could easily support it and avoid all the trouble and labour of collecting the guineas and half-guineas. Let some man come forward and say, "Here is £100.," and not let the movement have that poverty-stricken aspect so many of our movements have. Then I believe that the promises of the past would not only be amply realised, but far exceeded.

Mr. W. H. HERFORD : When I was a student in Germany, I picked up from Schleiermacher one little motto, which has remained in my mind ever since : that whenever one has a strong inner impulse which appears to be great, one ought, also, besides this inner impulse, to have some outward occasion, as it were, some providential holding out of the hand, some request, or some opportunity for action. I therefore venture to put forward, as strongly as I can, the fact with regard to these plans—whether ambitious or not ambitious—that we have not a shadow of an invitation from the older Universities ; and it is almost hopeless, if not undignified on our part, who represent free religion, free theology, and free learning in this country, to a certain extent, to go to them. That we could do a great deal of good if we did go to them I have not the slightest doubt, and until we as a college can go to the University of Oxford, because we have been invited thither—I don't mean by the heads of the colleges, but by the undergraduates—I think we should hesitate. I am far from believing that the Universities are the springs of all life and all truth in our country. A university, or two universities, which have allowed our revered friend and leader to remain up to his eighty-fourth year, without bestowing upon him those poor and miserable little titles of respect which they might have given, not only do not invite, but absolutely warn us away ; and I for one would have nothing to say to our college being taken straight to the Universities until we are perfectly certain that our Principal would be rated on an equality with the Principal of any other college, and that the appropriate officer, whoever he might be, might be upon the Hebdomadal Board.

The Rev. J. PAGE HOPPS : As to the statement that we are not asked to go to Cambridge or Oxford, it seems to me we are always asked to go anywhere where there is any work to be done by us. If we think we are needed, and are not asked, that is a very serious additional reason why we should go ; because, in the first place, they need us ; and they show their excessive need by not knowing that they need us, and therefore I very heartily support the suggestion that when we go we shall not go to build a chapel, but go in Mr. Armstrong's fashion. I am absolutely sure you can find the money ; the overwhelming, greater need, is to find the men, and I do not think you would have much difficulty in finding them. I am sure

the congregations would only be too thankful to let the ministers go and do their best.

The Rev. H. E. Dowson (Gee Cross),—My friend, Mr. Armstrong, has placed this resolution in my hand, and I have great pleasure in moving it:—

“ That a Committee be formed to arrange for religious services to be held at Cambridge, during the two winter terms of each session; that the Committee consist of Sir Roland Wilson, Charles W. Jones, Esq., the Rev. C. Hargrove, M.A., and the Rev. R. A. Armstrong, B.A.; and that, impressed by the importance of the movement, this Conference earnestly appeals to those congregations whose ministers may be invited to conduct such services, to forward the end in view by assenting to the arrangements necessary to set their ministers at liberty to accede to the proposal.” This Conference styles itself a National Conference; and I think, at this meeting, we are doing something to vindicate the title. Yesterday, our great leader delivered an address of national importance, and which will reach the ears of the nation; and to-day, even though we may not be invited, we wish to take our place, by this resolution, in one of the great National Universities. Our sons go there,—thank God, the Universities are thrown open to them! — and we mean to follow them there, and to speak not only to them, but to the noblest life of this great nation to which we belong. I have the greatest pleasure in moving the resolution.

The Rev. J. EDWIN ODGERS (Altrincham),—I second the resolution which Mr. Dowson has moved. I might say something from my own knowledge of the field which is open to us in the Universities, and what I conceive to be our duty with regard to them; but believing, as I do, that, throughout all that has been said, there has been substantial agreement as to these two facts, I will simply content myself with formally seconding the resolution which has been proposed.

Mr. JOSEPH LUPTON (Leeds),—On behalf of the Committee, although our Secretary has not risen, I have to say that this has come upon us without the slightest consideration. It is a very serious matter that we are asked to pass this morning. We are here, to some degree, representatives of our churches throughout England; and to pledge ourselves, by a vote this morning, to accept this suggestion, is a very serious matter. I am not prepared, as a member of a large and important congregation, to say that I should, for one, be willing to send my minister away, or accept the services that have been proposed. I may see it in a different light, after giving it further serious consideration; but it is sprung upon us in a way I little expected,—and I am not prepared, as one member of that Committee which you appointed to carry forward the Conference, to say I approve of this suggestion. I am sorry to differ,—I may not differ in the long run. I suggest that we should not carry a vote to-day, because, if we do, we shall be called upon, perhaps before long, to carry out the resolution. There might be difficulty in finding supplies for the pulpits of your churches if your minister is removed. It is a very important matter for us to consider; and I think it would be well to have this question brought seriously before the Conference Committee, and weighed thoroughly.

The Rev. Dr. GREAVES (Canterbury) : May I suggest, in answer to the previous speaker, that in such a case, where a minister is sent to Oxford or Cambridge, the committee should provide a substitute for that town, without leaving the worry to the members ; and volunteers might be asked to put their names down. A good many of us have no charge. I myself have had none for the last two years, and I should be most delighted to take duty for any of these gentlemen, who might do such an important work (which some of us, graduates though we may be, are not exactly fitted for), as to preach the reformed and exalted gospel before an audience at Oxford or Cambridge.

The Rev. JOHN ROBBEDS (Cheltenham) : We all listen with respect to anything that falls from my friend, Mr. Joseph Lupton, but it appears to me that the resolution does not amount to an absolute binding of any congregation to spare their minister. It merely amounts to an expression of opinion, that it is desirable that such services should be offered to the University of Cambridge, and that a committee should be formed, for the purpose of carrying out the scheme, if they find themselves able to do so. The funds must, of course, be all voluntarily given, and the ministers and the congregations who cöperate must do so with their own good will. I do not see that it amounts to a binding on the part of any minister or congregation ; therefore, I think, if this meeting approves of the principle of the resolution, we might pass it without any inconvenient consequences.

The CHAIRMAN : I feel very much sympathy with Mr. Lupton's objection, but, at the same time, what does the resolution amount to ? We are not instructing the Conference Committee to take the matter in hand. There are four gentlemen here, of whom I am one, who mean to carry out this work, and all that we ask for is this, that you will express your opinion as to whether you are in sympathy with us or not. We do not ask the Conference Committee to approve of our action in any way whatever. We do not ask you to take any responsibility. We only wish those who sympathise with us, and wish us God-speed, to hold up their hands ; and those who think we are making a mistake, to hold up to the contrary.

A large number of hands was held up in favour of the resolution, but before the negative was put,

The Rev. Dr. MARTINEAU (who was received with applause, the audience rising from their seats) said : I must confess that this resolution leaves me in a condition of very great and serious embarrassment. I was extremely glad that the subject was brought forward, and brought forward in a Paper so able and striking as that which we have heard, and supported, also, by such impressive speeches ; and I feel quite prepared to receive impressions which have been left upon me, and reflect upon these impressions preparatory to forming a judgment upon any course of action. I thought that this Conference was for the purpose of distributing suggestions that should be subject to reflection, and I did not think that we were called upon to pronounce upon a course of action, without even a single day to consider the subject that is broached. I feel, therefore, most strongly, with Mr.

Lupton upon this subject, and I think we have been taken by surprise by the production of a practical resolution, pledging us to approval, or pledging us to disapproval, of a suggestion which requires most serious deliberation, before any rational judgment can be formed upon it. I cannot vote for it, and, undoubtedly, I am most unwilling to vote against it, because I think it is extremely probable that, after a year's reflection, I might be prepared to vote for it. But if this Conference is to be turned into an ecclesiastical assembly, that shall at once appoint a committee, pledged to carry out particular action committing the whole body, which really is the nature of the case, I think it is assuming a kind of power which is altogether unreasonable. I should, therefore, feel seriously aggrieved at having to vote either way upon this particular subject; and I must entreat the persons present, who feel the least doubt upon the subject—who feel that there are two possible sides to the question—to request time for forming a judgment, before we are committed to action.

The CHAIRMAN: I am sure there can be but one feeling in the whole Conference that the matter should be dropped. After the advice of one to whom we all look up with such reverence, it would be, I consider, impertinent of me to put the resolution; therefore, I shall decline to do so. I think it will be better to postpone the matter. Now, I shall claim my five minutes.

We are told that the committee of the Manchester New College is again seriously considering the question—where is the best place for the college to be located? I want to appeal to the committee and trustees, in your name, not to settle the question so lightly as they did four or five years ago—not to settle it without taking the body of our churches into their confidence, because I maintain that while it is perfectly true we can do very little good in influencing that teaching college ourselves, I do say that the Manchester New College cannot do as much good without our sympathy and support, as it can do with it. There is one consideration I wish the committee to put out of their minds, and that is—where can the College, in the best and quietest way, carry out its work unobserved? I do not fear to place the college where it will have to fight for its position. We are continually asked, Why is it we are going down? Why are we losing ground? I do not believe we are going down. But what gave rise to that question? It is because the day of fighting is over. We are suffering from the fact that all men speak well of us, and I long for the time, thirty or forty years ago, when we had something to fight for. That was a time when we stood side by side, and I maintain that until every University in this country has established a chair of Theology, absolutely free to the professors and the students to follow the truth wherever it shall lead, and not be bound by foregone conclusions—until that time comes Manchester New College, which is the only institution that does carry out that free study, has a torch to hold up and keep burning brightly, and it will be a sad thing if, in our indolence, we allow that light to grow dim. There is plenty of work to be done yet. I believe that the time is at hand, when, if the earnest men in our and other churches choose, they

could get such a chair of Theology established at Oxford and Cambridge and the other Universities. Therefore, I appeal to the committee of our college not to settle the question without considering it very seriously. I have a very strong opinion on the subject myself, which I will not express now; but whether it is to be in London, or Manchester, or Oxford, or elsewhere, I hold it to be a matter of the very gravest and deepest importance.

Mr. WORTHINGTON then read a Paper on the subject of

### A CHURCH BUILDING LOAN FUND.

IT is a very serious and anxious moment for a new congregation when the time arrives for them to build a church, and the Committee does not know the amount of funds upon which it may reckon. The uncertain financial prospect often influences unfavourably the selection and purchase of an appropriate site. Some friendly architect may next provide them with a pretty drawing of a church, and sketch plans which may be carried out in part, if not as a whole; but they are left in sad uncertainty as to the amount of money really requisite for a suitable building, and in still sadder uncertainty as to the amount that can be raised, and the debt that may remain as a future incubus. The congregation does its best; but a new congregation seldom possesses wealthy members;—and even the most enthusiastic and self-denying generosity can rarely raise more than a few hundred pounds. Sometimes the church is built; and then, after a lapse of time, efforts have to be made to reduce the debt remaining on the building. Sometimes a more prudent policy seeks to raise the total sum required, or, at least, a considerable part of it, before the foundation-stone is laid. But, in any case, sooner or later, the time arrives when a grand effort has to be made to beg from all sympathising friends and congregations. A grant is obtained from some central body, such as the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, which is proportioned, not to the good-will of the Committee, but to the depth, or rather to the shallowness of its purse. If the chapel authorities be wise, they procure one or two letters from leading ministers acquainted with their circumstances, recommending their case to the favourable consideration of the generous public. And then the minister is sent forth as beggar-general through the country! I pity his sad case. He probably begins by calling upon any generous

laymen in his immediate neighbourhood, and by writing eloquent and persuasive letters to more distant ones. He is sure, in almost every case, of a courteous reception. But those who are able and willing to give freely, generally wish for some evidence that they will be giving wisely, or have ideas of their own as to the cases they prefer to assist. One, for instance, favours the effort to set forth liberal religion in a growing town; another prefers definite and dogmatic lectures; and a third is ready to assist the preaching of the Gospel to those outside existing churches. The poor minister may make his case good with a few liberal friends, and procure some handsome subscriptions to head the list in his advertisements and printed circulars;—and, then he has to enter on a begging tour, the difficulties and discomforts of which I can, fortunately for myself, only imagine. In one place, the congregation refers all such applications to a Committee, without whose sanction no member thinks of giving; and time is lost in procuring the necessary credentials. At another town, a weary round of calls may meet with a generous response from a few, a meagre contribution from many, and a refusal generally, but not, I fear, always courteous from others; and the discovery, that some one,—expected to be a generous giver,—is away from home! For months the unpleasant toil drags on, till, at last, a commencement is made with the building. Funds are still lacking to carry out the plans satisfactorily;—a Bazaar, or Sale of Work, or a Collection on the opening day, exhaust all available sources of aid,—and the congregation settles down under the grievous burden of a debt!

But this matter has to be considered also from the donor's point of view. The generous and earnest men, who rejoice to promote the formation of congregations and the erection of churches, are constantly receiving appeals such as the one I have described, and are often at a loss to estimate the merits of each individual case. Time and opportunity are needed to make inquiry; but they are busy men,—so that, unwilling to disappoint an anxious petitioner, they make a compromise between generosity and caution, by giving a smaller contribution than they would readily spare, if they had satisfactory evidence that their gift would be well bestowed.

Thus it too often happens that the result is unsatisfactory. In some cases a meagre and insufficient sum is raised, and a building, poor in design and faulty in workmanship, fails to attract the waverers who were half disposed to join the congregation, and cripples and dwarfs the church for ever. Perhaps in other cases, a successful begging expedition leads to the erection of a building in some situation where an independent congregation is never likely to be raised, and where a debt will be a perpetual drag. So the resources of the Central Association and the local Missionary Society are heavily taxed for many years to maintain a disheartened minister in charge of a scanty and discouraged flock. Where the best, and sometimes the only, chance of success, would be in sending one of our very best preachers to such a post, the means at command often fail to secure the continued services of a faithful and efficient minister.

A very happy, even if it be not a complete, solution of this difficulty, was brought under my notice when I visited the Saratoga Conference in 1884. The plan I refer to, is to provide a central fund, under the management of an efficient Committee, which shall make proper inquiry into every case that is brought to its notice, and when satisfied that aid will be well bestowed, shall make—not a donation, but—a substantial loan towards the building of such a church. Such a loan need not be saddled with any charge for interest, but is to be repaid by annual instalments, spread over a term of years, the most convenient term being one of ten years. The funds thus replace themselves in the hands of the Committee; and if a capital sum of £5,000. was lent in ten loans of £500. each, the annual repayments would enable the Committee to advance a new loan of £500. every year. The congregation, which might have had to pay 5 per cent. interest for money lent in the ordinary way, gets rid of the debt altogether by an annual payment of 10 per cent., spread over ten years. There is a sweet simplicity in such a conversion of perpetual debts subject to interest into debts without interest, terminating in ten years, which will, I think, commend itself to every congregation struggling with a debt.

Though this application of the method was new to me, it is one by no means untried in our country. The Established Church has a fund

called Queen Anne's Bounty, one object of which is to advance money for the erection of rectory and vicarage houses, and I believe that many parsonages have been recently erected by the aid of these loans, whose repayment is charged upon the income of the living, and spread over a term of years.

Then the Congregationalists have a Chapel Building Society, the Secretary of which has courteously sent me a number of printed papers, giving full information as to its plans and procedure. One department of its work is to make loans towards the erection of chapels. These loans vary in amount from small sums up to £300. or £400., and are repayable in a year, or by instalments spread over a term of five, six, eight, or ten years. The Society began to make these loans in 1856, with the modest sum of £140. During the next six years its annual advances averaged nearly £400., and then sprang at once to an annual average of £2,500. Up to the year 1886, it had made loans to the total amount of £58,413. towards the building of chapels, of which £42,255. had been repaid.

I am also indebted to the Secretary of the Baptist Building Fund for similar information. This fund is an older one, having been established for 63 years. It makes loans, not only for building, but also for altering and enlarging chapels, and in aid of the extinction of debts. For these purposes it has lent since its commencement a total sum exceeding £150,000. It makes loans annually to the amount of about £7,000. or £8,000., and receives nearly the same amount in annual repayments. A similar fund was established for Wales in 1862, and for Scotland in 1878, and both give promise of a useful future. They are supported by subscriptions and congregational collections, as well as by donations and bequests.

No doubt other churches have similar funds, but as the general principle appears to be the same, I have not pursued these enquiries further.

A most original and animated scene occurred at the Saratoga Conference of 1884. The Rev. Brooke Herford read a paper in favour of establishing a fund for making loans to congregations who were about to build churches. The large Methodist Chapel, lent for the Conference meetings, with its side and end galleries, was crowded with

an interested and attentive assemblage of ladies, ministers, and congregational delegates. The paper was received with enthusiasm, and, after a reference of the subject to the Business Committee, it was determined that such a fund should be then and there established. The Chairman vacated his post in favour of Mr. Herford, who announced that his own congregation in Boston would open the subscription list with a liberal contribution, promising an amount which fell short of that afterwards collected from his flock. Printed slips had been prepared, asking for a total sum of 20,000 dollars, or, say, four thousand guineas. These were issued to all the delegates, who were invited to make a return of the donations which they estimated that their respective churches would give, but on the understanding that these estimates were not to be regarded as pledges. These were distributed through the meeting, and a quiet and business-like movement took place, as the delegate from each church sought his companion, and they estimated together the probable contributions of their churches. One by one the slips were handed in, and Mr. Herford announced, with a genial word of appreciative gratitude, the amount of each estimate. This lively and unusual scene lasted for about half-an-hour, and the very handsome sum of £3,700. was virtually realised for the object in view. I believe the estimates of the delegates often fell short of the amounts actually contributed by the congregations. The American Unitarian Association had already had the scheme under consideration, and had set apart a sum of 25,000 dollars,—say 5,000 guineas,—for the fund. A Committee was appointed; trustees were selected, and the work was immediately begun, so that before the Conference met again in 1886, the whole sum which had been received, amounting to about £9,000. was practically applied to the purpose for which it had been collected. Now the fundamental principle of such a fund is that assistance shall be rendered towards the erection of chapels under circumstances which have been carefully investigated and approved. The Committee is bound to make due enquiries, such as are not possible to be made by individuals at a distance, and not always by those who are near at hand. It must satisfy itself that a *bonâ fide* and earnest congregation has been collected, with a reliable prospect of becoming, in course of time,

independent, or at any rate of doing such good religious work as—if they be too poor to maintain worship at their own cost—shall justify their being supported as a Missionary Church.

If such a Committee existed among us, composed of gentlemen whose names would ensure general confidence, I anticipate that it would win immediate and liberal support. Many who now give their guineas, their five pound notes, or larger contributions here and there, to perhaps half-a-dozen applicants every year, with some doubt and hesitation, would probably contribute a much larger total amount to a fund under the charge of such a Committee. Thus the necessity for ministerial begging tours would be dispensed with ; and would give place to an application to the Committee of the proposed fund. Unwilling donors would no longer be troubled by applications to which they often know not how to reply, for they would rely upon the Committee dealing with them satisfactorily. New churches would be founded with more prudent consideration, and with a better prospect of success. Nor would their promoters lose the individual support of neighbours and friends acquainted with their circumstances, who would give almost as they would have done before, whether they were or were not contributors to the general fund ; and the congregation would have the constant advice and support of a wise and sympathetic Committee.

In writing to me upon this subject, Mr. Herford has impressed upon me that such advances should be made only upon business principles. The loans need not bear interest, and probably would not do so. But they must be sanctioned only on a reliable and business-like undertaking that the annual instalments will be regularly and punctually repaid. The security, Mr. Herford says, must not consist of a mortgage note on the property, which the Committee making the loan would be unwilling to put in force, and would often be unable to realise ; but it must be a personal security from members of the congregation. And by fixing a limit of ten years as the longest period over which the repayment of the instalments can be extended, an assurance is provided that no unfruitful enterprises will be supported.

The Congregational Society, to which I have referred, has not only a capital fund, but an annual income from subscriptions and collections,

and can afford, where it is needful, to remit some portion of a loan, or even to make an occasional free grant. But in the outset of such a society's work, it must earn the character of being absolutely business-like in requiring the full repayment of the loans. Such loans, as they bear no interest, will prove of unspeakable benefit to the aided churches.

The importance of this subject was strongly impressed upon me by what I heard at the Saratoga Conference of 1884; and I should have liked to introduce the subject at our Birmingham Conference three years ago. But the Sustentation Fund had been established at Liverpool in 1882, and it seemed to me extremely important that it should not be supposed that the object of these Conferences was merely, or chiefly, to collect funds. The necessary means for securing Essex Hall were, moreover, being raised at that time, and it was clearly not a suitable moment for ventilating the proposal.

But the subject was mentioned in the recent report of the Unitarian Association. No great national effort for raising money—unless the effort to raise means for providing religious services for the masses be so regarded—is now before the churches which form this Conference, and my colleagues on the Committee urged me to bring this proposal forward on the present occasion. I have endeavoured, therefore, to lay the matter briefly before you. It is, I am sure you will agree, an important question. There need be no great difficulty in establishing such a fund. If the total sum given for the erection of Free Christian or Unitarian Churches since the passing of the Dissenters' Chapels' Act could be counted up, I am sure that the figures would astonish you, and would show what can easily be done. Nay, the sums annually contributed (except during the last few unprosperous years) for chapel building purposes are by no means small; and if those who give freely at everybody's call, and those who hesitate or decline because they desire an assurance that their money will be effective for the proposed object, will join their forces together, we could lay the foundation stone of such a fund so firmly that its future success would be secured, and with the additions it would hereafter be sure to receive, we should provide for all earnest and struggling Free Christian Churches, a most important help towards securing for them sufficient and suitable homes in which to worship.

The Rev. H. LERSON remarked, in opening the discussion on the Paper : I think we must all be agreed that nothing could be more unsatisfactory than the present method of raising money towards the building of churches, and, therefore, any reasonable suggestion of improvement will, no doubt, receive the careful attention of this Conference. There have been two endeavours to assist in the building of churches by grants from funds collected for the purpose. In Lancashire, such a fund amounting to several thousand pounds, was raised. The other was the Jubilee Fund of the British and Foreign Association, the total amount of which was about £8,500., of which, speaking in round numbers, £4,500. were devoted to the object of assisting in building twenty-one churches. The whole has gone into bricks and mortar. I often wish that we had it now. I should have been very willing to lend it again without interest, and I am quite sure that we should get additions to the proposed fund, as time went on, when it was seen that this was a permanent fund that was being wisely used. Unitarians are among the most careful of people with regard to the judicious giving of their money. I commend them for it, since this cautious deliberateness in taking up any new scheme, though it checks enthusiasm now and then, secures a good result in the end. The raising of the fund to which I first adverted, was an illustration of this quality of character in our people. They said, "If we contribute a fund for organised giving, we shall at least protect ourselves against the temptation to give for the sake of getting rid of importunate canvassers, about whose cases we can really know so very little, though perhaps we should willingly give more if we were better able to judge of them." But the proposals made in Mr. Worthington's paper do not simply appeal to motives of personal prudence or economy. And we do not want to save you anything in the amount that you are to give. Indeed, Mr. Worthington, I hope, trusts that friends will give more when they know that they will be giving wisely. The saving will be in the conviction that the money is not wasted, and that it could not be more worthily given. With regard to what Mr. Worthington mentioned of his experience at the Saratoga Conference, I confess to some uncertainty about our following so good an example. But, whether or not, there is one comfort that I think we may derive from the ventilation of the subject, namely, that it is clear from the paper we have heard, that we could begin the scheme if we only had £200., by lending that sum, and in the meantime trying to get more, as I certainly think we should. It may be a small beginning, but it would be practical and effective so far as the means will go. But I notice that our American friends have a different habit of giving from ours. They give more largely and freely, and they give more altogether. They seem to feel more of the impulse of a common movement than we do. We are, perhaps, too independent of this kind of mutual incitement, and not so easily moved to give, because we see other people giving, though this may be a good motive of its kind, as I am sometimes tempted to say, when I cannot get from higher considerations the help I want for some good object. We shall not need, I trust, much persuading to begin the raising of this fund after the lucid way in which the matter has been put before us in Mr. Worthington's Paper ; but one consideration which ought certainly to weigh with us is, that this is to be a purely business

transaction. It will save a world of misery to the poor minister who has often to collect the money for building his chapel ; while, at the same time, it will give the people who are building the church a new sense of responsibility in the matter. And if you say to me, Will they repay the money ?—I am inclined to think they will, from this consideration : that, if they do, there will be no interest to pay ; but, if they did not keep up their annual repayments, they might be called upon for double the current interest of the loan,—of course, on the security of some personal guarantee. I would make it a purely business affair, and it is in that view that I heartily support the proposals now laid before us. I wish again to remark that, if there is one thing I grieve over when I think of our Jubilee Fund expenditure, it is, that the money is all gone, while the Association received no return from the congregations that were benefited,—nay, we do not get even ordinary subscriptions from some of the places where the money was expended. I think you will succeed in maintaining the sense of responsibility, and some proper feeling of obligation, if, instead of giving money, you lend it at the time when it is most needed, and make it to be returned in reasonable annual instalments.

This closed the discussion.

---

Mr. DAVID MARTINEAU (London) then addressed the assembly. He said: The resolution which is placed in my hands I will read to you immediately, but I wish to say a word or two on a little matter that has occurred during the present meeting. We have had our sympathies strongly excited by various Papers. We feel, as men of business and ladies of business, that this Conference should not separate without in some way putting our foot down, and assisting the work of our various churches in the way that has been suggested by the Papers we have heard with such interest this morning. Mr. Lupton and Dr. Martineau have, with great wisdom, pointed out the necessity of not being carried away by the excitement and enthusiasm of the moment. At the same time, I think you will go with me in saying that we ought not to allow these feelings of enthusiasm for good work to evaporate. I have, therefore, a suggestion to make to you, for the paper I hold in my hand contains the names of gentlemen to whom we are going to delegate the task of promoting the next Conference in 1891, and I would suggest to you whether it would not be wise for us to ask those gentlemen to form themselves into a business committee ;—such a business committee as has been suggested to us by Mr. Worthington as having existed at Saratoga, a business committee to whom, when we feel full of enthusiasm over a church building scheme, or the establishment of Unitarian congregational life in our University towns, we might make known our desires that such a thing should be taken into their serious consideration. It appears to me that in this way we could combine the two points, the result of the enthusiasm which is natural to us, and at the same time keeping in mind what our counsellors have pointed out, the necessity of getting time to consider properly the results of our action. If we defer it to the next Conference, by that time many of us will find fresh objects of interest, and the work will have to wait. I would, therefore, suggest that it might be wise to form our

committee into a business committee. I am asked to move, "That the following gentlemen form a committee to arrange for a Conference in 1891, viz. :—

|                                     |                    |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Rev. R. A. ARMSTRONG, B.A.          | Mr. J. DENDY, Jun. |
| Rev. A. N. BLATCHFORD, B.A.         | Mr. JOSEPH LUPTON  |
| Rev. H. E. DOWSON, B.A.             | Mr. J. S. MATHERS  |
| Rev. J. PAGE HOPPS                  | Mr. F. NETTLEFOLD  |
| Mr. T. CHATFEILD CLARKE, F.R.I.B.A. | Mr. HERBERT NEW    |

*And the Secretaries :*

|                                      |
|--------------------------------------|
| Rev. H. W. CROSSKEY, LL.D., F.G.S.   |
| Mr. HARRY RAWSON                     |
| Rev. S. A. STEINTHAL                 |
| Mr. A. W. WORTHINGTON, B.A., F.S.S." |

Most of these gentlemen have done so much in connection with the present and previous Conferences, that I feel you will unanimously vote that they be appointed members of the committee to arrange for the Conference in 1891.

Mr. WM. BOWRING (Liverpool), who was asked to second the resolution, said : I had no idea I should have the honour of addressing this Conference, but I am sure we have had so successful a gathering that we are deeply indebted to the members of the committee who have made such admirable and generous arrangements for all the members here. I beg to second the resolution Mr. Martineau has proposed.

The resolution was then adopted unanimously.

The Rev. Dr. MARTINEAU, who was received with applause, said : I have been requested to move a vote of thanks to the members of the Leeds Committee. I am sure the resolution needs no recommendation from me, for no person can have been here for the last two or three days without being struck with admiration at the perfection and precision of the arrangements which have been made by our Leeds friends, and of the exceeding generosity of the way in which they have provided for the convenience of all the visitors that have come from so many distant parts of the country. I must say it is no more than I should expect, for I have had many opportunities of observing the character of Yorkshire generosity. Somehow or other it appears to me that their hearts are large in proportion to their county ; and as Yorkshire is our biggest county, I believe that the Yorkshire heart is about the biggest heart we have in England ; and, if there can be a distinct proof of that, I am sure we have had most satisfactory and delightful proof by the reception we have met with from our friends. It is, therefore, with the utmost pleasure that I move the sincere thanks of this Conference to the local committee, and especially to the secretaries, Mr. Mathers and Mr. Connon, for the arrangements which they have made for the successful meeting of our friends here.

Mr. WOOLLEN : When I was requested to second this vote of thanks, I felt that a great honour was conferred upon me, and I undertook to do so with very great pleasure. I may say—in reference to the local committee and the secretaries—in language not my own, that they "outstrip all praise, and make it halt behind them." But that is just what we all expected from our Leeds friends ; and I wish that all

the towns in England were animated with the same generous, and self-denying, and determined spirit, to serve the interests of our churches. Every one in this room can testify how well deserved these thanks are. Our visit here, by the splendid arrangements that have been made, by the anticipation of all the wants that we possibly could have, has been gratifying to us, and will send us home full of admiration for the Leeds committee. And I hope that what inspiration we have received, and what enthusiasm has been kindled in our hearts, will not die with the occasion ;—that we shall take it to our respective spheres of usefulness, to the towns from which we have come, and to our homes, so that we may prove ourselves in the future more worthy of the Unitarian name, and more devoted servants of its interests. I have great pleasure in seconding the resolution.

Mr. A. W. WORTHINGTON : I ask the Chairman's permission to allow me to support this resolution, because I do not think anyone can know, so well as I do, the unwearied courtesy and unceasing toil with which Mr. Mathers and Mr. Connell have carried on their labours for many weeks past. The tax that has been laid upon them, the difficulties with which they have had to contend, owing to the returns that were due on the 17th of March having not ceased coming in till last Friday, and the endless efforts that they made, up to the last moment, to secure hospitality to those who had not sent in their names earlier, must have involved them in an immense amount of trouble ; but they met every claim without a murmur, and with ceaseless effort to satisfy every applicant, and with the greatest desire to promote every arrangement that could benefit the excellent meetings that we have held.

The CHAIRMAN, in putting the resolution, said he should like to add one word. When the Conference met at Liverpool, they thought they had done well ; then they went to Birmingham, and thought they had done better ; now, in Leeds, they had done perfectly. And he pitied, from the bottom of his heart, the next town that asked the Conference, because they would need all their ingenuity to invent any improvement upon this meeting.

The resolution was then agreed to.

Mr. J. S. MATHERS, in responding to the compliment, said : I am trembling just now at having to speak to such an audience as this. If any of you would like to bring me to my senses and steady my nerves, say something that I agree with or disagree with in politics. If I were to occupy your time for a quarter of an hour I could not say more than this : if our Leeds friends have made this gathering, by their local work and the machinery they have had to set in motion, pleasant, comfortable, and agreeable, we are amply repaid for all we have done. At the same time, I must just say, on behalf of our Leeds friends, that when we set out we asked for £350. to assist us in our work. In a very short time nearly £450. was given, and in addition to that I can assure you the work, especially that of the ladies, has been unwearied. The cry every day has been, "Give us more work," and we only wished we could have committed some more work to them. We have been able to meet all the demands upon us for accommodation for guests, even to the first day of the Conference. When the time comes round for you to come again to Leeds we shall endeavour to do the same.

Mr. J. WREGITT CONNON also acknowledged the vote. He said,—I can assure you we have had only one object in view, and that has been to ensure, if it were possible, that this, the third of our Conferences, should at least equal, if it could not be made to surpass, those which have preceded it. This object, if we are to believe all that has reached our ears from the many flattering remarks made by kind friends, has been achieved. But it would be most unfair, on my part, to acknowledge your thanks without saying that so much success as we have reached has been, in the largest measure, due to the wonderful powers of organisation, and the indefatigable industry and unwearied energy of my friend and colleague, Mr. Mathers. I can hardly say with how much trepidation I consented to join him in the most difficult of offices, — a dual Secretaryship ; and I think it speaks much of Mr. Mathers that two positive natures, — because I am sorry to say we have both extremely positive natures, — should have succeeded in working together for months without the slightest disagreement or difference of opinion. And, during the months I have worked with Mr. Mathers, I have received so much kindness from him, that I venture to say that what was lately but an intimate acquaintance has developed into what will be a lasting and life-long friendship. Even all we could have done would have been in vain but for the generous co-operation and support of the three congregations in Leeds. Our difficulty has not been to find workers but to find work for them. As an illustration of the anxiety that has been displayed to assist us, I may say that a gentleman came to assist us on a Sunday afternoon, and he got so completely engrossed in the work that he forgot the lapse of time, and at a quarter to two in the morning his heart-broken wife burst into the committee-room, to know what had happened to her husband ? That is the spirit that has animated every one who has had to do with the Conference. If such success has been attained, I am very grateful ; but no thanks I can possibly receive can equal the consciousness that the work we have given to the Conference has not been in vain.

A DELEGATE, in the body of the Hall : As one of the delegates who is staying with a Congregationalist, I think we ought to give some recognition to those outside our body, who have shown us their hospitality.

The CHAIRMAN : I am quite sure there is only one feeling in the meeting, and that is of gratitude to those outside our body, who have received us with such hospitality, and it really does not need a formal resolution of thanks.

This concluded the proceedings.

---

At 7-30 in the evening, a Popular Meeting was held in the Town Hall, at which there was a large attendance. Sir JAMES KITSON, Bart., presided, and addresses were delivered by Mr. T. Chatfeild Clarke, of London, on "The Need of a Free and Manly Faith for the great Masses of our People ;" Rev. Dr. Crosskey, of Birmingham, on "Religion in Relation to National Education ;" Rev. T. W. Freckleton, of London, on "Religion, the Crown of Life ;" and Rev. J. Page Hopps, of Leicester, on "A Rational and Practical View of a Future Life, and the urgent need of it for the Church and the World." The great organ was played, and a large Choir led the assembly in singing several appropriate hymns.



